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XXX

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VOLUME XXX □ 2000

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EXHIBITING THE MIDDLE EAST
COLLECTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS
OF ISLAMIC ART

LINDA KOMAROFF, GUEST EDITOR

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Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution
Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan

PUBLISHED BY

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University of Michigan

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Special subscription rates are currently available as a membership option through the American Oriental Society. For more information write the American Oriental Society, Hatcher Graduate Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1205, or access the society's home page at <http://www.umich.edu/~aos/>.

The full text of *Ars Orientalis* is also available in the electronic versions of the *Art Index*.

On the cover: Detail of "Portable Objects and Metalwork," Exposition of Muslim Art of Algiers, Algiers, April 1905. Photo: Cliché Famin, published by A. Fontemoing. After Georges Marçais, *L'Exposition d'Art Musulman d'Alger, Avril 1905* (Paris, 1906), pl. X. Full photo reproduced on page 23.

ISSN 0571-1371
Printed in the United States of America
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Exhibiting the Middle East: Collections and Perceptions of Islamic Art

ABSTRACT

Recent interest in the historiography of Islamic art has focused on scholarship, museums, and collecting from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century, the formative period for the field. Such scholarly attention is essential insofar as future directions in the field will be delineated in part through rediscovering the past. This special volume of *Ars Orientalis* presents an intriguing view of the early period of Islamic art history by examining collections, collecting patterns, and special exhibitions in Western Europe, the United States, and Turkey as part of the evolutionary process of the discipline.

THIS GATHERING OF PAPERS addresses some of the ways in which collecting patterns, collections, and special exhibitions have shaped and altered scholarly as well as popular perceptions of Islamic art. What was collected, in the Middle East and in the West, in the past and up to the present day, is crucial to these perceptions. The history of collecting is closely tied to the history of the field of Islamic art and its maturation as a scholarly discipline. In fact, these two spheres have developed a reciprocal relationship: what was collected initially dictated what was studied, and what was studied has helped to refine collecting patterns. Special exhibitions, ranging from broadly defined nationalistic and formalistic approaches, as in the great Persian Exhibition of 1931, to exhibitions focusing on a particular period, dynasty, medium, or even a single work of art, especially from the 1980s until the present, have influenced and in turn been influenced by developments in the field.

Along with special exhibitions, the installation of a museum's permanent collection provides one of the most public arenas—that is, outside of the Middle East—for experiencing Islamic art at first hand. On the most basic level, the installation itself, the choice of objects, their arrangement, their interrelations and implied visual relations make a fundamental statement about Islamic art and, by extension, the cultures that fostered its development. The evolution of museum installations (both permanent collections and special exhibitions), from an emphasis on the concerns of ethnography and applied arts and crafts to a more historical, synthetic approach, has largely been driven by advances in the field of Islamic art. More recently, a renewed interest in Western museums as educational institutions, coupled with a new sensitivity to multiculturalism, has begun to alter the general concept and concerns of the installation.

The topics outlined above are important for understanding the historiography of Islamic art, which has begun to attract scholarly attention. One recent publication that addresses certain of these issues is the proceedings of a conference held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in 1996, whose aim was to examine the growth and change of Islamic art as a serious discipline, focusing on the role of collectors, museums, and scholars, primarily in Europe,

in the evolutionary process.¹ The conference, which took a thoroughly historical but uncritical approach to the subject, provided the inspiration for a much smaller North American meeting held at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, in 1998 under the auspices of Historians of Islamic Art. The present collection of papers is an outgrowth of the Toronto meeting and should be viewed as a complement to the proceedings of the V&A conference. A comprehensive treatment of so broad a subject is clearly beyond the confines of any single collection of papers; however, this special volume of *Ars Orientalis* will, it is hoped, provoke discussion and further interest.

The issues discussed in this volume help to delineate some of the developments in the field of Islamic art, a field that has evolved considerably in the last three decades. Edward Said's *Orientalism*,² postmodernism, postcolonialism, theoretical and contextual approaches, as well as a broadening of the geographical and temporal areas of inquiry have all influenced the discipline and have led some scholars to question the traditional notion of a "universal" Islamic art. Insofar as the future directions of the field will to some extent be determined by reexamining the past, the essays in this volume should make an important contribution. These papers, which themselves demonstrate different methodologies and systems of interpretation, concentrate on the collecting as well as temporary and permanent exhibition of Islamic art in Western Europe, the United States, and Turkey, from the second half of the nineteenth through the first half of the twentieth century. Without purporting to be comprehensive, this volume presents an intriguing view of the early history of the field of Islamic art, one that is partially filtered through the veil of commerce.

David Roxburgh's article focuses on collections and temporary exhibitions of Islamic art (some of which were primarily commercial in nature) in the last decades of the nineteenth and the opening years of the twentieth century. He emphasizes the role played by exhibition practices and Western museology as a means of understanding the motivations and responses of scholars/amateurs/collectors. He begins with a fictive description of a display of Oriental carpets and textiles in a Parisian department store and goes on to consider the relation of commercial

design and display to design and display in early exhibitions of Islamic art (commercial and otherwise). His premise is both significant to the subject and relevant to museum practice in the later twentieth century, not merely because of the burgeoning commercial enterprises that are today attached to many of the world's great art institutions but because numerous museums have begun to regard their visitors as customers to be studied and pleased, often gearing their installations to optimize a specific message.

Late nineteenth-century exhibitions of Islamic art skillfully blended connoisseurship, scholarship, and commercialism with the pretext of authenticity through the (re)contextualization of the objects on display. Frederick Martin's exhibition of his own extensive collection, staged in Stockholm in 1897, represents perhaps the most thorough amalgam of these seemingly disparate elements.³

Roxburgh describes early exhibitions such as that of Goupil's Islamic collection in Paris in 1888. This was actually an exhibition *cum* sales display, in which the objects were arranged within a carefully constructed architectural space intended to provide an appropriately "Oriental" ambiance. Other subsequent exhibitions—an 1893 exhibition, again in Paris but not exclusively commercial, and Martin's aforementioned 1897 Stockholm exhibition—continued to recreate an "authentic" setting in which vast numbers of objects were artfully displayed, helping to reinforce the notion of the immense riches of the "Orient." Although Roxburgh cites one contemporary criticism of this type of installation and its Orientalizing tendencies, such display tactics seem to have been the accepted norm. The great 1910 Munich exhibition, which intentionally eschewed the bazaar mentality in terms of display, was thoroughly criticized for its expansive spaces and whitewashed walls. Roxburgh sees in this exhibition a new approach in which the objects are organized, and the installation is designed, to recount the history of the art. In fact, much of the criticism of the 1910 Munich exhibition seems to center on its spacious design, which allowed visitors to focus on individual objects and their relation to one another, and its lack of contextualization of these objects.

These points become especially interesting in relation to some of the responses to the installation

of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Islamic galleries, which opened to the public in 1975. Revealing for the first time the vast scope of the museum's Islamic collection, this installation displayed more than 1,000 objects, organized chronologically and geographically among ten galleries. For its time, the Met's galleries, whose basic layout and configuration have remained essentially unchanged, were state of the art, utilizing, for example, innovative in-gallery storage/display techniques (many of which proved to be impractical).⁴ Detached manuscript illustrations were (and are still) exhibited beneath table-level, slanted plexiglass decks provided with chairs, helping to recreate the experience of looking at a manuscript in a leisurely and, within the confines of a museum, a comparatively intimate manner. Also significantly, the works of art were not, wherever practical, segregated by medium (something that also may have been partially attempted in Munich in 1910). Rather, pottery, metalwork, works on paper, glass, and textiles were exhibited alongside one another in an effort to make specific visual connections; for instance, writing occurs not only on the manuscript page but also on a textile, or on pottery, metalwork, stone, or glass.

The Met's Islamic galleries elicited two illuminating responses, which were in fact published together in 1976. One is by Oleg Grabar, whose role in the field of Islamic art needs no further clarification, and the other by Amy Goldin, a self-professed "amateur."⁵ In reaction to the juxtaposing of so many objects, Grabar sees the constant repetition of particular decorative themes and the recurrence of certain shapes, techniques, and styles that helped to reveal the nature of Islamic art as indicative of the scope and scale of the Met's collection rather than the result of conscious curatorial choices about what to exhibit, and where and how to exhibit it, in order to establish visual relations and analogies. He attributes the effectiveness of one gallery devoted to material from the museum's excavations at Nishapur to the massing of related objects "as though the group makes better sense than any one of its elements."⁶ He goes on to suggest that works of Islamic art are perhaps not best understood within "a setting that excerpts them from their purpose, and that they are in fact to be seen as ethnographic documents, closely tied to life, even a reconstructed life, and more

meaningful in large numbers and series than as single creations.”⁷⁷ Grabar proceeds to discuss the apparent requirement of context—that is, architectural context—noting the effectiveness and popularity of the Met’s Syrian room (a virtually complete room from an early eighteenth-century Damascus house). He states further on that it is the “real or fantasized memories of the Alhambra, of Isfahan or of Cairene mosques [that] provide the objects with their meaning.”⁷⁸ The sort of installation that Grabar seems to suggest here comes very close in practice, if not theory, to those of the late nineteenth century discussed by Roxburgh, and what Grabar criticizes in the Met’s installation is in many ways similar to condemnations of the 1910 Munich exhibition.

The second review, by Goldin, also comments on the lack of architectural context, noting that its “exclusion contributes immeasurably to the general impression of a consumer paradise.”⁷⁹ Apparently, for Goldin, this massing together of so many luxurious objects was evocative of, perhaps, a department store display, which again brings us back to Roxburgh’s associations between nineteenth-century exhibition practice and the retail context, still alive and well according to some perceptions in the latter part of the twentieth century. Grabar’s 1976 article observes the enormous advances in the field of Islamic art since the nineteenth century in terms of dating, attributions, regional distinctions, and social and symbolic associations, although the means by which this information was to be communicated through a museum installation evidently was and continues to be something that curators still must grapple with, as Roxburgh’s paper underscores.

While Roxburgh’s article reflects on the early collecting and exhibiting of Islamic art, Tomoko Masuya’s considers the means by which one type of object—Persian overglaze painted luster tiles from the Ilkhanid period (1256–1353)—came into European collections, most notably the Victoria and Albert Museum. Such luster tiles, which served as architectural revetment on secular and especially religious edifices, had a strong appeal in the West, where they were admired for their wondrous reflective surfaces and because they fed the imagined view of the Orient, serving as “a revelation of a lost art redolent of the romance of the East.”¹⁰ Masuya’s study seeks to reconstruct the circumstances

under which Ilkhanid tiles were acquired and to locate the buildings from which they came.

One of the questions Masuya poses is: How did these tiles, some of which share numerous features with tiles found at Takht-i Sulaiman, the sole excavated palace of the Ilkhanid period, whose excavators found no evidence of modern disturbances, find their way to Europe in the nineteenth century? In answer to the riddle of the Takht-i Sulaiman tiles, Masuya cogently argues that they were removed from their original site in the fourteenth century and reused to decorate two mausoleums in Qum. She very convincingly demonstrates that the removal of these tiles from Iran, along with others from a fourteenth-century mausoleum in Natanz (that of ‘Abd al-Šamad) and a shrine in Varamin (Imāmzāda Yaḥyā), was effected in part through the agency of several individuals. Each of these individuals seems to have had some relationship to the Qajar government that would have enabled the removal and export of tiles from religious monuments. These buildings are all now largely denuded of their original tile decoration.

A key figure in these enterprises was Robert Murdoch Smith, the director of the Persian Telegraph Department in Tehran, who in 1873 became an agent for the South Kensington (later Victoria and Albert) Museum. Murdoch Smith made a number of important acquisitions for the museum, some of which may have been aided by his relationship with the Qajar ruler Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (r. 1848–96).¹¹ These acquisitions were accompanied by reports, which, as Masuya notes, by 1877 were distinctively less forthcoming about the origin of the tiles. In 1875, Murdoch Smith had recommended that tiles removed from religious buildings be purchased quickly, because the attention of the *‘ulamā* had already been attracted, and indeed in the following year the Qajar government, urged on by the religious authorities, issued an injunction against the pillaging of religious monuments. Although this edict does not appear to have hindered Murdoch Smith’s continued acquisition of tiles, it does seem to have led to the deliberate obfuscation of facts regarding their provenance.

This same widespread removal of works of art to the West affected other Islamic lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹² For example, in Egypt, the increasingly rapid disappearance of

works of art from Cairo's mosques and other religious institutions, due in no small part to the rapaciousness of Western collectors, led in 1881 to the creation of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe. The Comité soon began to transfer objects to the al-Hakim mosque, which in 1886 became the first home of the Arab Museum (later the Museum of Islamic Art).¹³ Elsewhere, antiquities regulations began to be introduced; the concomitant emergence of a newly defined sense of national identity in Turkey would lead to the creation of the first Islamic arts collection at the Ottoman Imperial Museum.

Ottoman interest in the collecting of Islamic art forms the topic of Wendy Shaw's article. The burgeoning sense of nationhood and a desire to possess the cultural symbols of the immediate Ottoman past were important factors in the formation of a collection of Islamic art at the Ottoman Imperial Museum in 1889, more than forty years after the founding of the museum. Shaw proposes that the designation "Islamic" art (perhaps a late nineteenth-century byproduct of the encyclopedic museum that encompassed all of world art, taxonomically arranged to conform to a Western system of cultural development) was in a sense subverted by the Ottomans for their own nationalistic purposes. Namely, the Ottomans used the concept of a universal Islamic art and the related idea of Islam as a national characteristic to reassert the political connections between the empire and Islam.

Shaw also suggests that a growing awareness of the strong European attraction to this art and a desire to withhold it from the West furthered the development of a national collection of Islamic art. Reported thefts of tiles and carpets from historical monuments, despite the enacting of a comprehensive antiquities law in 1906, encouraged the removal of such works of art to the Imperial Museum. But the thefts also led to the recognition that these works of art had monetary value. Shaw cites an interesting note from a local police chief concerning a tomb in Beşiktaş frequented by foreign tourists; the police chief expresses fear that the guardian may be tempted to steal the tomb's standard because of its value and suggests that the standard be removed to the Imperial Museum for safekeeping.¹⁴

Many works of Islamic art that were incorporated

into the Ottoman Imperial collections and displayed in the purely secular context of a museum exhibition hall had been removed from religious institutions. Through this transfer, such objects exchanged much of their original devotional or functional meaning for a new aesthetic and historical appreciation. According to Shaw, certain paintings that incorporate depictions of objects from the Ottoman Imperial Museum by Osman Hamdi, director of the museum from 1881 to 1910, symbolically encapsulate the recontextualization of this art. There is a certain irony in this, as displays of Islamic art in Europe at this time were attempting to (re)create the lost context of the object, while the Orientalist painter (in whose tradition Osman Hamdi was trained) purported to have captured it.

Islamic art from the Ottoman Imperial Museum today forms the core of the collection of the Turkish and Islamic Museum, Istanbul. Located since 1983 in the renovated sixteenth-century palace of Ibrahim Pasha, the museum functions as both an art and an ethnographic museum, with two different but related collections.¹⁵ In many ways, this museum, housed in an Ottoman palace, with its "period" rooms on the first floor representing traditional Turkish life and historically arranged galleries of Islamic art on the second floor, presents one solution to some of the issues of exhibiting the Middle East considered above.

In terms of the collecting of Islamic art in the West, the great national museums of Europe, such as the British Museum and the Louvre, both founded in the eighteenth century, had a considerable head start on American institutions; the first major art museums in the United States (e.g., the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) were founded only in the 1870s. But the later nineteenth-century European enthusiasm for collecting Islamic art also extended to American collectors. Some of these individuals bequeathed their collections to institutions like the Museum of Fine Arts and the Metropolitan Museum, while men such as Henry Walters and Charles Lang Freer used their collections to establish public museums named in their honor. Walters and Freer, along with their advisors, guided the formation of the Islamic collections of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, and the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., respectively.

Marilyn Jenkins-Madina demonstrates in her article on the formation of the Met's Islamic collection that this largest and most comprehensive assemblage in the United States was significantly shaped not by curators or specialists but by the collectors and dealers who donated or sold to the museum. The statistics compiled by Jenkins-Madina indicate that more than half of the present-day Islamic collection of 11,000 objects had entered the museum prior to 1932, when a department of Near Eastern (later Islamic) art was formed. Among the generous and civic-minded collectors who contributed to the Metropolitan Museum were Edward C. Moore, James F. Ballard, and the Havemeyer family. The latter relied heavily upon the dealer/collector Dikran Kelekian (1868–1951) for their Islamic acquisitions.

Kelekian was one of several influential Armenian dealers who amassed a large and important collection of Islamic art and for whom dealing and collecting were analogous pursuits. In addition to his indirect and direct involvement with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which mounted two exhibitions from his collections, Kelekian sold to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Freer Gallery of Art. He also played a leading role in the formation and expansion of Henry Walters's collection of Islamic art; this important relationship is documented and discussed in Simpson's article.

Henry Walters appears to have met Kelekian at the 1893 Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, which represented the young dealer's first foray into the American art market. Shortly thereafter, Walters began to acquire works of ancient and Islamic art from Kelekian on a regular basis. Simpson suggests that collecting Islamic art may have appealed to Walters partly as a way of making tangible the imagery and objects represented in the Orientalist paintings collected by Walters's father and familiar to him from childhood. Whatever the reason, as Simpson notes, Kelekian was tremendously influential in Walters's acquisition of Islamic art. Of special interest among the materials Simpson uses to document her study are the photographic albums, compiled by Kelekian for Walters, containing images of works of art that Walters had purchased or was being encouraged to purchase (see Simpson's fig. 9).

Apart from Kelekian, the Islamic collections of the Metropolitan Museum and the Walters Art Gallery have another point in common—one that is shared, in fact, by nearly all American public collections of Islamic art, namely the preponderance of Persian decorative arts, especially pottery. Kelekian (though not to the exclusion of all other dealers) may have had a hand in this. As both Jenkins-Madina and Simpson note, Kelekian through his own "collections" and related publications stressed the importance of Persian art in general, and ceramics in particular, in an attempt to cultivate the taste of new collectors and confirm the taste of more seasoned ones. A letter of 1898 from Kelekian to the president of the Metropolitan Museum, cited by Jenkins-Madina, indicates the dealer's consternation that this material had not yet attained popularity among collectors. Shortly thereafter, Kelekian's collection of Persian pottery and related material was exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, thereby providing the dealer with an excellent opportunity to effect a change in taste.

Kelekian certainly did not create a predilection for Persian art in the United States, but he may have helped to increase the appetite for it among the many collectors and institutions to whom he sold. This dealer seems to have been especially recognized by the Iranian shah, as he was named Persian Consul-General in New York in 1902 and Commissioner-General at about the same time. This distinguished status, noted by both Jenkins-Madina and Simpson, may have given his "collections" a certain imprimatur, while it also, presumably, would have made it easier for the dealer to obtain and export works of art from Iran.

The great popularity of Persian art may be traced to a variety of factors not necessarily exclusive to Kelekian. One important factor was availability. Comparatively large numbers of high-quality objects are preserved from medieval Iran, as noted more than thirty years ago by Grabar, who referred to this phenomenon as a veritable "artistic explosion." Ettinghausen later attributed it to an artistically favorable climate promoted by patrons from the rising mercantile class.¹⁶ In the early twentieth century, commercial and clandestine excavations at Sultanabad, Rayy, and Varamin produced great quantities of ceramic

wares and tiles. And although Nishapur was excavated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art between 1935 and 1947, objects from commercial excavations there first began to reach the art market at a much earlier date.¹⁷ Finally, in contrast to Turkey and Egypt, where national collections (ancient and Islamic) began to be formed in the later nineteenth century, such museums were only founded in Iran in the 1930s, which until then allowed for a greater laxity in the enactment and enforcement of export laws (for example, the apparently ineffectual edict of 1876 noted above). Admittedly, the quest to uncover Persian works of art, either through excavations or by other means, may itself have been driven by the popularity and hence monetary value of this material.

Throughout much of the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century there seems to have been a perception among collectors, dealers, and some scholars that Iran was the source of all that was original or perhaps best in Islamic art. Non-Persian works of art, such as Iznik pottery, often continued to be referred to as Persian, even after evidence to the contrary was produced.¹⁸ Such misperceptions and misrepresentations may have had their roots among certain racial theories promulgated in the mid-nineteenth century, which found their way into commentaries on art.¹⁹ According to these theories, since the Persians were defined racially as Indo-European or Aryan, it naturally followed that their art would be superior to that of the non-Aryan Arabs and Turks.

Racial overtones aside, perhaps the chief proponent of the view that Persian art was inherently separate from and superior to other arts produced in the Islamic world was Arthur Upham Pope, who has been described, not entirely inaccurately, as “the P. T. Barnum of Islamic art.”²⁰ It is today somewhat difficult to define accurately exactly what Pope was—scholar, dealer, charlatan, opportunist, entrepreneur? Perhaps, he should be viewed simply as the ultimate “spin-doctor” for Persian art and culture. Nowhere was Pope’s advocacy of Persian art and culture more apparent than in the 1931 International Exhibition of Persian Art in London, which is the subject of the final article by Barry Wood.

The 1931 exhibition, more spectacle than historical representation, included more than 2,000 works ranging from prehistoric times through the Islamic period. As Wood describes it, this vast assemblage presented a very particular and one-dimensional view of Persian art, one that was held and expounded by the show’s main organizer—Pope. Pope was concerned with an art of pure form, making it possible through the exhibition to link the art of ancient Iran with that of the Islamic period (and up to the then-present day), by promoting the idea of a Persian “spirit” that transcended foreign conquerors and the changing and varied ethnic and religious identities of Iran’s peoples over the centuries. The exhibition and especially the monumental *Survey of Persian Art*, which was published seven years later, had a profound impact on a generation of scholars, collectors, and amateurs alike. Among its positive effects, as Wood points out, was the establishment of the basic framework for the field of Persian manuscript illustration.²¹ The great Persian Exhibition also influenced the collecting patterns of many museums (especially in America), which acquired works brought to prominence by the 1931 exhibition that had been in the hands of dealers and private collectors.

Wood concludes his article with a comparison between the 1931 exhibition and the 1989 exhibition *Timur and the Princely Vision*, shown in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles. Both exhibitions gathered quantities of Persian art from far-flung corners of the earth, and both were concerned to present an explicit view of the nature and meaning of this art. Finally, both were instrumental in stimulating specific kinds of research, one strictly formalist, the other thoroughly engaged with questions of cultural and especially political context and reflecting the increasing maturation of scholarship in the field. Wood’s article points to a more accurate understanding of these different junctures in the history of the study of Islamic art, as well as the evolution of exhibition practice in the twentieth century. □

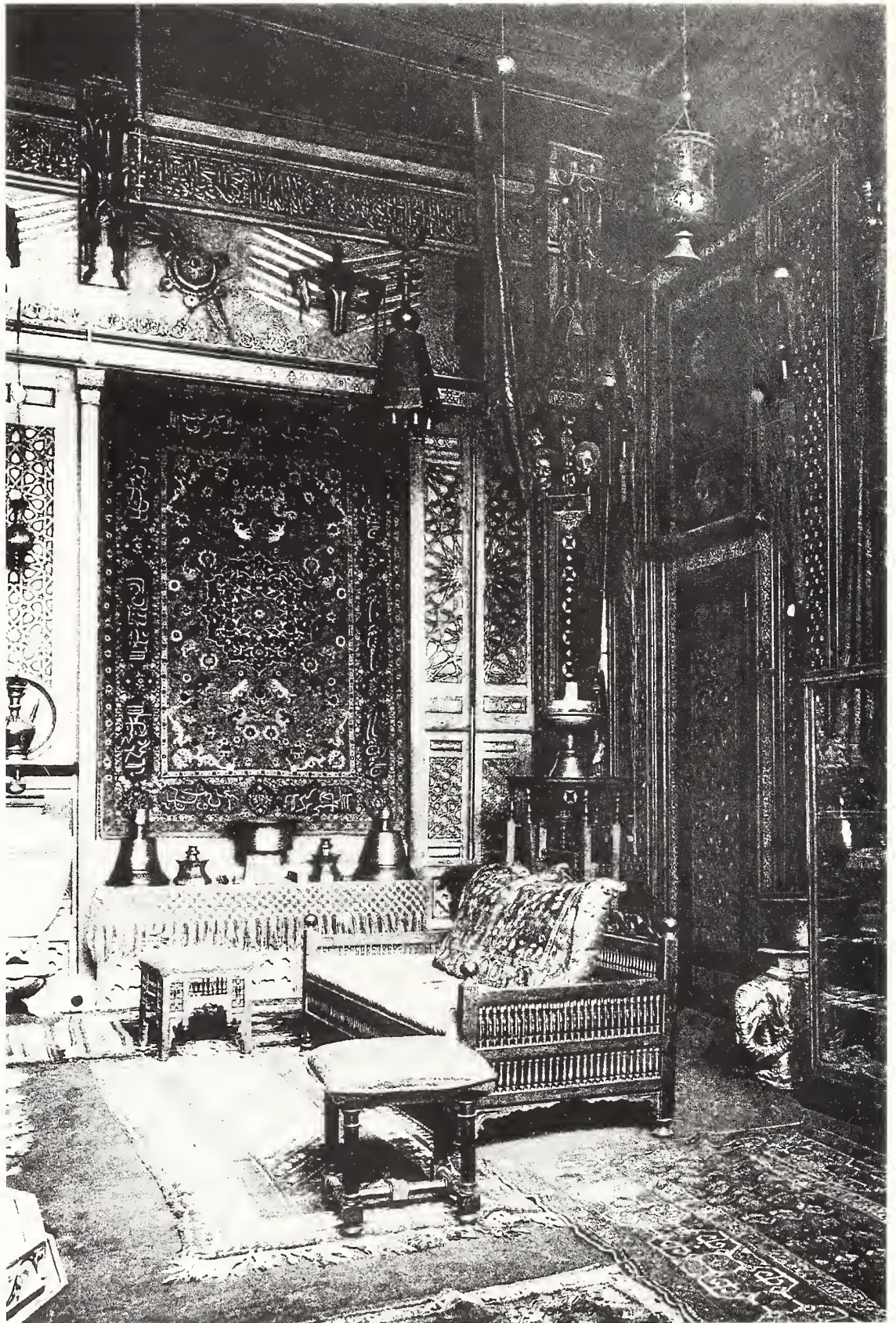
Notes

1. Stephen Vernoit, ed., *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2000). Another more broadly related collection of articles is included in *Museum International*, no. 3 (July–September 1999); it comprises a guest editorial by Oleg Grabar and several articles focusing on the history of Islamic collections and/or their display at the Hermitage; the British Museum; the Museum for Islamic Art and State Museum, Berlin; the Museum of Islamic Art, Tehran; and the Turkish and Islamic Museum, Istanbul. Also see Stephen Vernoit, “The Rise of Islamic Archaeology,” *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 1–10 and, by the same author, an excellent article on the early collecting of gilded and enameled glass in Europe, “Islamic Gilded and Enamelled Glass in Nineteenth Century Collections,” in *Gilded and Enamelled Glass from the Middle East*, ed. Rachel Ward (London: British Museum Press, 1998), 110–15.
2. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).
3. On Martin’s commercially successful exhibition of his collection of manuscript illustrations in 1912, see Glenn Lowry with Susan Nemazee, *A Jeweler’s Eye: Islamic Arts of the Book from the Vever Collection* (Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 1988), 31–32.
4. I am grateful to Marilyn Jenkins-Madina for sharing with me some of her memories of the installation of the Met’s Islamic galleries.
5. Oleg Grabar, “An Art of the Object,” *Artforum* 14 (March 1976): 36–43; Amy Goldin, “Islamic Art: The Met’s Generous Embrace,” *Artforum* 14 (March 1976): 44–50.
6. Grabar, “Art of the Object,” 37.
7. Grabar, “Art of the Object,” 39.
8. Grabar, “Art of the Object,” 39.
9. Goldin, “Met’s Generous Embrace,” 44.
10. The quotation comes from Henry Wallis’s introduction to *The Godman Collection: Persian Ceramic Art of Mr. F. DuCane Godman, F.R.S.: The Thirteenth-Century Lustered Tiles* (London: n.p., 1894), 3, cited more fully at the close of Roxburgh’s essay in the present volume and providing a perfect segue to Masuya’s article. There is a further link, as some of Godman’s Persian tiles, now in the British Museum, were acquired through the very means described by Masuya; see her appendix.
11. Stephen Vernoit, “Murdoch Smith, Sir Robert,” in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (New York: Grove’s Dictionaries, 1996), 22:340.
12. See Stephen Vernoit, “Islamic Art and Architecture: An Overview of Scholarship and Collecting, c. 1850–c. 1950,” in *Discovering Islamic Art*, ed. Vernoit, 1–61, esp. 7–14.
13. See Donald Reid, “Cultural Imperialism and Nationalism: The Struggle to Define and Control the Heritage of Arab Art in Egypt,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24 (1992): 57–76.
14. Masuya, in this volume, also cites an interesting and related event, described by an early twentieth-century source, in which Europeans actually approached the caretakers of a shrine in Qum in order to obtain tiles. The caretakers declined to sell due to the low price offered, but the determined Westerners hired thieves to steal the tiles instead.
15. See Nazan Ölcü, “Living the Past: The Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art,” *Museum International*, no. 3 (July–September 1999), 32–37.
16. Oleg Grabar, “The Visual Arts,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5, *The Saljuq and Mongols Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 626–58, 626; Richard Ettinghausen, “The Flowering of Saljuq Art,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 3 (1970): 113–31.
17. Charles K. Wilkinson, *Nishapur: Pottery of the Early Islamic Period* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973), xxiii.
18. E.g., see Nurhan Atasoy and Julian Raby, *Iznik: The Pottery of Ottoman Turkey* (London: Alexandria Press, 1989), 71–72.
19. See Vernoit, “Islamic Art and Architecture,” in *Discovering Islamic Art*, ed. Vernoit, 6–7.
20. Stuart Cary Welch, “Private Collectors and Islamic Arts of the Book,” in *Treasures of Islam*, ed. Toby Falk (London: Sotheby’s, 1985), 26–31, 28. Welch repeats the comparison with P. T. Barnum in a blurb quoted on the dust jacket of the biography of Pope and his wife Phyllis Ackerman, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (Ashiya, Japan: SoPA, 1996): “I lump him . . . with such glorious people as Captain Cook, Picasso, assorted gangsters, pirates, and quite a few politicians, pioneers!”
21. On this same subject, but considered from a highly personal perspective, see B. W. Robinson, “The Burlington House Exhibition of 1931: A Landmark in Islamic Art History,” in *Discovering Islamic Art*, ed. Vernoit, 147–55.

*Au Bonheur des Amateurs:
Collecting and Exhibiting
Islamic Art, ca. 1880–1910*

ABSTRACT

Temporary exhibitions of Islamic art in Paris, Stockholm, Algiers, and Munich (ca. 1880–1910) are studied through catalogues, photographic records, and reviews. The history of early exhibitions is traced by analyzing social and economic forces, principally the agency of the collector, who defined aesthetic values and techniques of display primarily in domestic spaces. The amateur's social values were translated to the public sphere through methods of display. Despite the amateur's effort to maintain social distinction in the face of a growing market, the very features of display—densely packed objects arranged in seeming disarray—that the amateur had used at home were appropriated in commercial venues such as the department store. New techniques of installation, derived from the Secession, were used in Munich in 1910 to free objects from the connotations of Orientalism. Although such techniques attracted scathing criticism, especially from French circles, they would become the mode of choice in future museums.



No sooner had they passed the door than they were greeted with a surprise, a marvel which enraptured them all. It had been Mouret's idea. He had recently been the first to buy in the Levant, at very favorable terms, a collection of antique and modern carpets, of rare carpets such as until then had only been sold by antique dealers at very high prices; and he was going to flood the market with them, he was letting them go almost at cost price, was simply using them as a splendid setting which would attract art connoisseurs (*la haute clientèle de l'art*) to his shop. From the centre of Place Gaillon one could catch a glimpse of this oriental hall, made entirely of carpets and door-curtains, which the porters had hung up under his direction. . . .

This sumptuous pasha's tent was furnished with arm-chairs and divans made from camel-bags, some scattered with designs of multi-colored lozenges, others covered with artless roses. Turkey, Arabia, Persia, the Indies were there. Palaces had been emptied, mosques and bazaars rifled. . . . Visions of the Orient floated beneath the luxury of this barbaric art, in the midst of the strong odour which the old wools had retained from lands of vermin and sun.

—Emile Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1882)¹

ZOLA'S NOVEL, from which this passage was taken, centers on a fictitious Parisian department store named *Au Bonheur des Dames*.² The novel's striking human interest derives in large measure from the massive social changes that it describes. Indeed, its recurring descriptions of minutely observed store displays are of equal interest and form an intriguing commentary on contemporary techniques of retail display. Elsewhere in his novel, Zola introduces Octave Mouret, "revolutionary window-dresser . . . who had founded the school of the brutal and gigantic in the art of display." For a display of silk textiles, Mouret "wanted avalanches, seemingly fallen at random from disembowelled shelves"; "He

used to say that on leaving the shop the customer's eyes should ache."³ By placing commodities within reach of eye and hand in stunning and beguiling arrays and by democratizing luxury, Mouret ensnared the buying public, causing havoc at home as desire stretched the family's financial means to their limit.⁴

In his carpet display, Mouret sets a trap for the connoisseur and widens his buying audience by putting the "Islamic" carpet, until then a commodity defined by elite taste, within reach of a broader clientele. The display played off artfully arranged pieces against heaps of cheaper rugs, combined them with furniture, and brought together products in the "pasha's tent" from regions of the Islamic world. The fiction of authenticity established through the creation of an imaginary context—an evanescent domestic setting in the store⁵—and origin—textiles culled from bazaar, mosque, and palace—augmented the value of new rugs as they appeared alongside the old. Their history could be smelled. Odors from the wool wafted through the air as an inescapable olfactory patina. Amid this dense accumulation, specimens from every region of the Islamic world could be seen, perused, and purchased.

Au Bonheur des Dames may appear a strange beginning to an essay about early collecting and exhibition of Islamic art, but the novel does highlight numerous and significant issues for the history of art, particularly aspects of exhibition practice. Foremost among these aspects is the method employed for showing objects and their psychological impact on an audience. The second is the permeability of those techniques as they were applied to the contextualization of objects—and the relations among objects—in a variety of viewing contexts, which were subject to constant change. Contexts and installations made different claims for their objects; the spaces and ensembles of display possessed potentially multiple resonances and associations for the viewer—for example, the retail context of the department store and the universal exposition. The third aspect concerns the status or significance accorded to objects from the Islamic world, which might be reduced to the political, historical, monetary, and aesthetic, and to ongoing distinctions among categories of object (fine art, applied/industrial art, decorative art, ethnography/curio).⁶ That Islamic art objects were admired

FIG. 1. *Oriental room, at the home of Albert Goupil, 7 rue Chaptal, Paris, before 1888. Photo: Imprimerie de l'Art, Paris, 1888. After Catalogue des Objets d'Art de l'Orient.*

by many cannot be denied. In fact, a recurring theme in the emerging discourse on Islamic art at the time was the art tradition's curative power for the modern European fine and industrial arts.⁷ But Islamic art objects also represented a past glory, relics of a now diminished and corrupted "Oriental" culture.⁸ Distinctions between substandard contemporary production and the superior products of the past only acquired a sharper focus as the century drew to its end. Viewing contexts and installations linked to private collecting and to the expansion of Islamic collections in state-sponsored museums worked together to define "Islamic" art⁹ and ultimately led to the art tradition's institutionalization in the university and museum.

This essay focuses on collections and temporary exhibitions of Islamic art—and their interconnections—between about 1880 and 1903 in Paris and also examines exhibitions held in Stockholm (1897), Algiers (1905), and Munich (1910). Exhibitions in other European cities, for example in London (Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1885)¹⁰ and Vienna (Imperial and Royal Austrian Commercial Museum, 1891),¹¹ were of particular importance among the first displays of Islamic art, but they are not considered here in any great detail.¹² In what follows, exhibitions are described and analyzed according to their display, arrangement, and contents, with the objective of encapsulating their nature as exhibitions, a goal that is met with varying degrees of success given the sparse documentation of some exhibitions, especially in comparison to our contemporary practices. The same is also true for their reception: some are given only passing mention; others inspired a voluminous response. Also uncommon are references to exhibitionary tenets and philosophies; the exhibition practice of most early exhibitions must be deduced from what are often incomplete written statements or off-hand remarks and occasional photographic records. Of equal importance in this essay is the circle of participants involved in the promotion, study, and exhibition of Islamic art.

The absence of a fully expressed theory of exhibitions is not at all surprising. The exhibition practices of the second half of the nineteenth century were constantly changing, with experimentation in new forms of exhibition space and techniques of display.¹³ In fact, the clearest articulation of display techniques

is often found in contemporary trade magazines like *The Store Window* (issued from 1897). A retrospective analysis is further complicated by critical variables, such as the art market's quickly changing support structure,¹⁴ and by debates over aesthetics and artistic practices. The bulk of theorized exhibition debate was generated by individual artists, artists' groups, and the growing and evolving class of professional critics, who considered themselves members or representatives of the vanguard, creative figures opposed for one or another reason to the official salons and who called for independent exhibitions.¹⁵ The implications of such debates (and their resolution) for the display of objects from another time and place—especially objects that were only beginning to find a foothold in the museum—are often unclear but find their clearest expression in a comparatively late concern for the historical art object's autonomy. This concern was ultimately foregrounded in the choice of installation techniques; the associative and connotative values of some modes of installation became undesirable.

Other interrelated issues—the formation of museums in the Middle East and North Africa, the development of museum collections in Europe,¹⁶ factors that fostered and sustained an increase in collecting, the role of the nineteenth-century universal expositions,¹⁷ the development of European nations' imperial and colonial programs,¹⁸ and the emergence of the discipline of anthropology and the category of ethnography in which non-Western arts were often placed¹⁹—fall beyond the scope of this essay, although it must be admitted that these topics are inextricably connected to its central theme. This essay may be considered as an introduction to the early collection and exhibition of Islamic art, only one portion of a deep historiographic and cultural analysis that would trace this specialization within the discipline of the history of art and determine how it got where it is today.²⁰

AMATEURS' COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITIONS IN PARIS IN THE 1880S AND 1890S

A handy little sales catalogue, which documents the now dispersed collection of Albert Goupil (1840–84),

son of the savvy art dealer Adolphe Goupil,²¹ is divided into two sections: the art of the Orient and of the Occident; within each section the objects are grouped together according to medium and briefly described.²² Goupil's collection, comprehensive in its coverage of media, paralleled the emerging scholarship on Islamic art.²³ The Oriental section lists 296 items, some of them illustrated with engravings and photogravures. Photographs documenting interiors of his home conclude each section of the catalogue (fig. 1). Hence, the catalogue documents the collector's accumulation piece by piece and illustrates the ensembles that the amateur (a term used for "connoisseur" in the late nineteenth century) orchestrated from them.

Hôtel Drouot organized the sale that took place between 23 and 27 April 1888 at their auction house and at the home of Albert Goupil, 7 rue Chaptal, on Saturday 28 April 1888 at 3:00 P.M. Visitors could preview some of the objects at Goupil's home over the two days (21–22 April) preceding the show. A preamble to the catalogue praised the collection as a whole, its arrangement, and the collector's "variety of inspirations." Here one could find Persian carpets and Arab glassware together with marbles and tapestries of the fifteenth century, furniture of the Renaissance, modern paintings and drawings. These carefully chosen objects were arranged in two rooms, one for Oriental objects, the other for Occidental ones. The anonymous author remarks:

Everything is not arranged there completely pell-mell, however, but according to an expert disorder (*savant désordre*), which puts things in their proper place and gives them their genuine value. Two rooms, or perhaps two ateliers—one dedicated to the Orient and the other to the Renaissance—permit their owner to think himself transported by turns inside some palace from *The Thousand and One Nights* or a dwelling of a great lord of the sixteenth century.

The interior photographs provide evidence for how Goupil had arranged objects from his collection in an interior space (fig. 1); presumably the visitor could experience these interiors during the preview and final sale days held in Goupil's home.

Goupil's Oriental room at 7 rue Chaptal had

been lined with carved and inlaid wooden panels and doorways, sections of a *muqarnas* cornice placed high above the room against textured wall surfaces, carpets hung in niches or laid across the floor. Cushions were deftly placed on top of pieces of wooden furniture, low stools, and a deep divan with a low rail on three sides. Metal candlesticks and ewers were set on tables or ledges, lamps suspended from the ceiling. A large display cabinet housed miscellaneous smaller objects.²⁴ The room offered a total environment for its collected objects—as a kind of live-in museum²⁵ wherein objects functioned as highly valuable, decorative appurtenances complementing the well-appointed interior space.

The mode of presentation adopted in the sales catalogue places the potential buyer in the Oriental (and Occidental) room and ignores the collection's impending dispersal. Goupil's aesthetic sense and good taste are shown by the way he manipulates objects to establish comparisons and juxtapositions that bring out similarity or difference in form, design, and subject matter, subtle harmonies and contrasts. The numerous objects were arranged in an "expert disorder," to produce a semblance of informality, a seemingly random array but within a unified structure that enhanced the aesthetic value of the individual components. Of course, even after the collection was dismantled, each object would retain its pedigree, authenticated by the fact of its having been owned by Goupil.

The strategy employed in the sales catalogue and its preamble focuses on the personality of the amateur and argues for a seamless relation between collection and collector. The collection's quality matches that of the man. Some years later in 1894, Georges Marye, reporting in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* on the Exhibition of Muslim Art at the Palais des Champs-Élysées in 1893, would single out Goupil's collection of Persian carpets offered up at auction and claim that the 1893 exhibition was the first to rival it.²⁶ An earlier confirmation of Goupil's aesthetic sensibility had appeared in 1885 in essays by Emile Molinier (a curator at the Louvre) and Henri Lavoix on the Occidental and Oriental portions of the collection, respectively.²⁷ Lavoix's essay on Goupil's Oriental art began with his recollection of taking notes "alone in this vast room arranged with so much taste and with such an original disposition,

in the middle of this oriental museum where a half-light penetrates, softened by the *mashrabiyya* (*moucharaby*).²⁸ Standing in this room, Lavoix's mind turned to the man "who brought together each of these riches one by one." Lavoix concludes by noting that Goupil does not behave with the vanity of a possessor but as an amateur, full of joy at his discoveries and their artistic merit.

A similar presentation of a collection through its collector is used in the sales catalogue for French jeweler, painter, and collector Henri Vever. In it, L. Roger Miles describes the atelier, located on the sixth floor of an apartment building,²⁹ as a refuge, a "place to talk, to discuss painting and painters."³⁰ Vever's collection combined modern painting with the Oriental art of the past. In his detailed diaries, Vever records numerous visits to friends' homes, where the gathering of men would examine items that they had collected. Illuminating is an entry in Vever's diary dated 23 January 1898, in which he records a visit to Charles Gillot, a friend and printer by profession:

Afternoon, at Gillot's [place]—Callot, Lefèvre, Joly, Ch Houdard, and me—we were in ecstasy at every step before the wonderful pieces of this magnificent collection—it is certainly the most well-balanced gathering but also the most beautiful that one can see. Every series is represented in it by a quantity of choice pieces: lacquers, pottery, bronzes, paintings, etc. etc. And all of it is arranged with a refined taste—furniture of Grasset, oriental carpets, the general disposition is perfect. It seems that when Gillot sets a new object in a showcase that it is improved, like a painter who puts a stroke on the canvas—It is a perfect harmony and an exquisite refinement—And what a likeable and unpretentious man!³¹

Vever's comparison of collector to painter underscores the collector's choices and his role in shaping aesthetic ensembles.

On 17 October 1899, Vever describes another visit to the home of Gillot, this time for lunch.³² Gillot had asked him to bring his "beautiful Persian book," which he, Gillot, and Grasset then examined. In addition, Vever took with him a book of Japanese sketches that Grasset also liked.³³ Gaston Migeon

arrived later for dessert, and together they looked at drawings by Kenzan. Presumably, Goupil, like Vever and Gillot, used his home as a quiet setting for discussion with choice friends of the same aesthetic predilections to commune with objects. For them Islamic art functioned as a palliative to refresh the spirit and soul. Its formal features were to be studied in a setting whose power may even have been to effect a mental transport to another time and place.

The amateur's collection was private and exclusive; in order to see it one had to be admitted to a circle of like-minded, qualified, and financially well-equipped individuals, who were nearly always male.³⁴ Although collecting had become possible for a wider social group than before because a growing art market allowed purchase without requiring travel,³⁵ exclusivity was maintained by enforcing strict criteria of connoisseurship so that buying top-class objects only became harder. The development of higher connoisseurial values had the effect of reinscribing differences between social groups just as they seemed in danger of disintegrating. Occasionally, objects from private collections would be transferred from the private domestic space to the exhibition for public view to allow the initiated and uninitiated alike to glimpse treasures that lay hidden away.³⁶ The activities of collection and visual examination allowed the amateur the means to affirm his social status in private, and this status could be translated to a public setting as a "dramatization of bourgeois private life."³⁷

The particular form of displaying objects in a private domestic context also showed the collector as a creative persona. Goupil's collection was arranged in what might be termed "ateliers" and not just rooms. Lavoix considered Goupil's home to be a museum; in Vever's mind, Gillot's arrangements were analogous to an artist placing brushstrokes on a canvas. The fact that the authors' references fluctuate between different spaces, graded along an increasingly private to public axis, offers an insight into the range of associations for some contemporary viewers, especially to the artist's studio of the late nineteenth century.³⁸ But nowhere—and of course this is not at all surprising—do we find references to either the department store or to the universal exposition, although these commercial contexts, ironically, shared many of the same features of display and the



FIG. 2. *Collection of Hakky-Bey, Paris, 1906. Photo: Georges Petit, Paris. After Collection Hakky-Bey: Objets d'art et de haute curiosité.*

spectacular aspect of uniting objects to simulate an authentic context.³⁹ The passage from Zola's novel makes a gesture toward contemporary social mores and structures that sought to prevent the conflation of, or association between, commercial and noncommercial spheres. Otherwise why would the "revolutionary" Mouret's effort to tempt connoisseurs into the store's domain be so scandalous (even if tacitly so in Zola's text)? It is in this context that the display of objects owned by dealer and collector Hakky-Bey acquires a special resonance (fig. 2). The photograph offers a visual preface to a sales catalogue published in 1906 when Hakky-Bey's collection was put up for sale, lock, stock, and barrel (even the wooden display cases were sold).⁴⁰ The photograph almost certainly shows his shop, but it is a space domestic in its scale and almost so in its trappings—the plush, pat-

terned wall hangings, gas lamps, and carpets underfoot. But the absence of furniture for sitting suggests a retail context. The interior illustrates the porosity between public and private, domestic and retail, through particular display techniques.

Another figure in French collecting circles was Charles Schéfer (1820–98), who became Professor of Persian at L'Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes in 1857. His collection—once housed at his home on avenue Ingres at Passy—encompassed art from North Africa and the Middle East, China and Japan. Henri Cordier lamented the dispersal of Schéfer's collection in the year of his death, in a sale organized by Hôtel Drouot in 1898:⁴¹

One must deplore the dispersal of such a collection: the Orient is poorly represented in France,

not only in private galleries but also in state museums; and that despite the fact that we are a great Muslim power. The Louvre has plainly shown its dearth [of objects] through its embryonic oriental rooms. The museums founded by Cernuschi and Mr. Guimet are devoted to China and Japan; who will give us their equal for the treasures of Syria, Egypt, and the Maghrib?⁴²

Figures like Goupil and Schéfer were pioneers of sorts; as private collectors they sought out and purchased objects at a time when public institutions, especially in France, were only beginning to develop and expand their holdings. Cordier addresses the lack of a permanent institution and of fully developed, comprehensive state-sponsored collections of Islamic art. In an essay of 1878, Lavoix expressed the same regret. Reviewing the mixed media exhibition of Arab art at La Galerie Orientale du Trocadéro (in conjunction with the Universal Exposition), assembled from the collections of private collectors and urged on by Albert Goupil,⁴³ Lavoix complains about its imminent dispersal and the likelihood that this ensemble of objects would never be reunited.⁴⁴ Addressing an unidentified friend (perhaps Schéfer), Lavoix writes, "I hope . . . that this oriental gallery will not be scattered without a good catalogue to restore to us all of the treasures of knowledge that it brought. Never before has a collection of this genre been so great in number and so instructive . . . all the rich furniture [*mobilier*: also portable objects] that adorned and that adorns Arab houses and palaces, all of it is there."⁴⁵ He concludes his review essay by suggesting that "his dear friend" use the exhibition's materials to write a history of Arab arts and industries.⁴⁶

The year 1893 was a milestone in the exhibition of Islamic art in Paris. A general exhibition devoted exclusively to Islamic art opened on the first floor of the Palais de l'Industrie on the Champs-Élysées. Comprising some 2,500 objects, it was organized by artists and distinguished amateurs.⁴⁷ The show's title, Exhibition of Muslim Art, caused some controversy; by departing from the usual term *Arab art*, the exhibition overturned old habits. A reviewer, Georges Marye,⁴⁸ noted that it lacked the order that one would

have hoped to find and then talked specifically about the exhibition's organization:

It is obvious that the picturesque aspect was sought after, pampered, and that the development of its charms has caused some harm to the character of a work that should only have been scientific. . . . This fair criticism, formulated since the beginning, could not have been avoided entirely. At first it was necessary to strike the eyes and to react to conventional orientalism. Some concession has been given to it in the first room, but it was a case of forced measure that organizers of exhibitions know well. On the other hand, the lack of conviction regarding the project's success has long paralyzed people who had agreed to lend their help to this interesting enterprise, which has resulted in delays, lacunae, and even error. But it is good to declare that this is the first general exhibition of Muslim art that has been attempted; its success is destined to affirm our taste and sympathies for aesthetic manifestations whose value we were the first to understand. France has opened a way that others have since entered without risk, profiting from her efforts and work.⁴⁹

Marye's statement suggests an emerging tension between the common practices of installation applied to Islamic art and a desire to escape their Orientalist associations and that an opportunity was missed in Paris in 1893, when a new vision was not completely realized. The exhibition of Orientalist paintings by the *Peintres Orientalistes Français* could not have helped. Like much of the discussion about the collection and exhibition of Islamic art in France, Marye's review is imbued with a nationalist sentiment that was given its most forceful expression in the literature surrounding the universal expositions. The anxiety expressed by many reviewers over the dispersal of private collections reflected a fear that France's patrimony was eroding.

The impact of private collectors or amateurs on France's national consciousness should not be underestimated. The collectors and amateurs' activities and efforts—collecting, lending objects to exhibitions, and publishing a host of articles and essays in

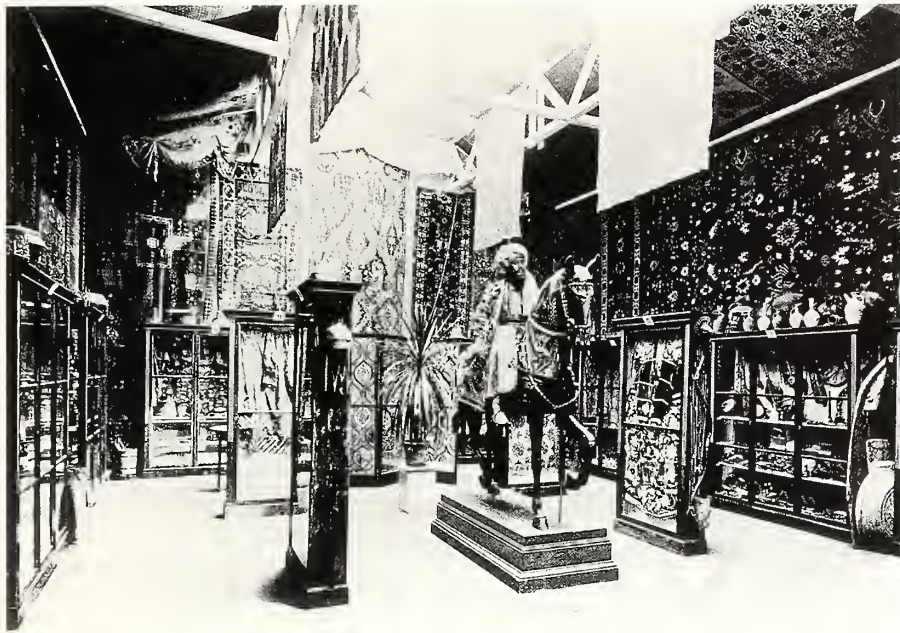


FIG. 3. *Interior view with Bukhara rider at center, Collection from the Orient in the General Art and Industry Exhibition, Stockholm, 1897. Photo: Norstedt and Sons, Stockholm. After Martin, F. R. Martins Sammlungen aus dem Orient.*

contemporary journals—were as much about self-advertisement as they were about the promotion of Islamic art. Collectors not only collected but also reviewed exhibitions and promoted their collection through publications. In this way they were able to manipulate the market and to take advantage of it,⁵⁰ giving greater visibility to an artistic tradition that would then be more systematically acquired by state museums.⁵¹ Indeed, collectors like Vever served as members of newly formed museum advisory boards; he became a member of the Society of Friends of the Louvre,⁵² a semiprofessional role that formalized his personal connection to Migeon. It may not have been a coincidence that Lavoix's and Molinier's essays about Goupil's collection preceded its sale by three years; they certainly could only have enhanced its prestige and value. From our perspective none of this seems new, but in the 1880s and 1890s the interaction among collectors, dealers, and the market was a relatively new phenomenon; objectivity or conflict of interest were not considered problems and remained uncontrolled by any mechanism. Instead, the cultural climate of late nineteenth-century France produced the prime conditions for a fruitful symbiosis between private and public spheres—the amateur's newest and best deal—and at a time of heightened political concern for the nation's expanding colonies.

COLLECTION FROM THE ORIENT, GENERAL ART AND INDUSTRY EXHIBITION, STOCKHOLM, 1897

Frederik Robert Martin, Swedish-born diplomat, collector, dealer, and scholar, exhibited his *Collection from the Orient* at the General Art and Industry Exhibition in Stockholm in 1897. The exhibition handbook contains several interior photographs (figs. 3–6) and a briefly annotated list of objects that could be found there.⁵³ The objects were hung on walls and ceiling or placed in display cabinets and cases lined up against the walls or in the middle of the floor. A roughly geographical arrangement was followed—beginning with the Caucasus; moving on to Persia, Turkey, and Egypt; and ending with Turkestan. In some cabinets objects were grouped together according to type, for instance, musical instruments (cabinet no. 2), ceramics (cabinet no. 9), and weapons (cabinet no. 10); in others they combined different media. Some of the shelves were arranged like miniature studies to resemble domestic vignettes. Cabinet no. 9 (fig. 6), devoted to ceramics, contained six shelves resembling an archaeological cross-section—shards and fragmentary pieces piled in the lowermost shelf; bowls, plates, lamps, and wall tiles becoming more complete with increasing elevation. All media

FIG. 4. *Interior wall with cabinets nos. 11 and 12, Collection from the Orient in the General Art and Industry Exhibition, Stockholm, 1897. Photo: Norstedt and Sons, Stockholm. After Martin, F. R. Martins Sammlungen aus dem Orient.*



FIG. 5. *Detail of cabinets nos. 5 and 6, Collection from the Orient in the General Art and Industry Exhibition, Stockholm, 1897. Photo: Norstedt and Sons, Stockholm. After Martin, F. R. Martins Sammlungen aus dem Orient.*



(carpets, silk and cotton textiles, ceramic, metalwork, stucco, woodwork, carved stone, works on paper) were represented in the exhibition, and every available surface—horizontal and vertical—was filled.

Entry to the room seems to have been through a single door set into a corner, modeled after one of the Arab houses in Cairo. From this off-axis entrance the visitor was confronted by the Bukhara rider (fig. 3), a bearded mannequin decked out in richly em-

broidered clothes and a striped turban and mounted on a horse clad in rich textile caparison and tackle. A three-tiered wooden plinth raised the central figure above the freestanding cabinets that encircled it. From the ceiling above hung cotton and silk textiles that filtered the light from the skylights above them. Immediately to the right of the doorway was a stepped marble structure covered with a carpet (fig. 4), a large potted plant placed on a wooden plinth, and the last

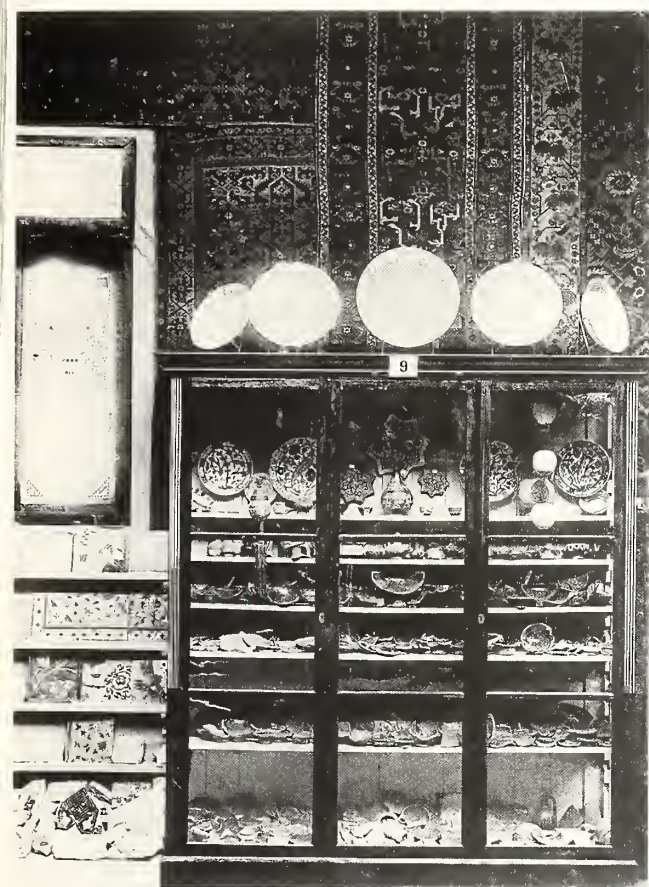


FIG. 6. Detail of cabinet no. 9, *Collection from the Orient* in the General Art and Industry Exhibition, Stockholm, 1897. Photo: Norstedt and Sons, Stockholm. After Martin, F. R. Martins Sammlungen aus dem Orient.

two cabinets (nos. 11 and 12) of the numbered circuit placed against the wall. Ceramic plates, garments, fringes, and tassels were arranged around and above the doorways and cabinets. A small chair and table were set up at the opposite end of the entry wall; presumably the table contained information for the visitor. Cabinet no. 1 was placed immediately beyond the table and chair.

The room was decorated with additional plants set on low plinths and seating for the visitor; for example, a low bench after cabinet no. 3 was covered with a richly patterned carpet, with other carpets hung on the wall behind to cushion the seated visitor's back. The crowded walls and shelves of the room must have produced an overwhelming display of color and material, an effect exaggerated by the light filtered through the textiles hung above and the

floor-to-eye-level area lined with glassy, reflective display cases.

The handbook also mentions a loggia exhibiting objects of mixed media and a room where the visitor could find an exhibit of photographs, but the relation between these auxiliary spaces and the main room is unclear. The photographs included general views and architecture of the Caucasus, Constantinople, Bursa, Konya, Asia Minor, Cairo (Islamic and Pharaonic), Turkestan, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khokand, and the Urals.

This extremely dense, cluttered installation—where sheer quantity of objects within definable series argued for the exclusivity of individual items—was also used in the universal expositions, annual salons, and commercial galleries.⁵⁴ Lighting by a skylight diffused through hung fabrics and amenities such as furniture and potted plants were also common in the commercial galleries. Elements like the waxwork mannequin of the authentic Oriental on horseback and the combination of art objects and photographic exhibit—photographs documenting distant architecture (and possibly ethnographic images)⁵⁵—were also common in pavilions at the universal expositions. The doorway—as a point of entry—copied after a Cairene Arab house perhaps signified the visitor's movement to another place in much the same way that the architecture and installation of separate pavilions or entire quarters at the universal expositions had done.

The objects in the *Collection from the Orient* on display in Stockholm belonged entirely to Martin. One-man exhibitions by collectors were not uncommon. Two years later (1899), Friedrich Sarre (1865–1945) put his collection on public exhibit in Berlin at the *Königlichen Kunstgewerbemuseum*. And in 1912, Martin would proffer his collection for public view again, though this time it consisted of only paintings, drawings, and arts of the book from Persia, India, and Turkey.⁵⁶ Martin was not unusual in uniting the roles of scholar, collector, and dealer; his entrepreneurial skills are adequately attested in the use of exhibition and publication to promote Islamic art and to increase sales, a rationale already proposed for Martin's 1912 exhibition.⁵⁷ If the 1912 exhibition was intended as a sales pitch, it was an effective one. Within a few years many of the works on paper owned by Martin passed

into the hands of other private collectors and museums. In Stockholm, his intention may also have been to promote the objects on display and to encourage their sale. The photographs certainly show installation techniques that project the object as commodity. In examining these photographs one has the impression of not just looking but somehow shopping.

EXHIBITION OF MUSLIM ART, MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS, PAVILLON DE MARSAN, PARIS 1903

The Musée des Arts Décoratifs was not the first Parisian venue to exhibit a range of media. The exhibition at the Palais des Champs Élysées in 1893 had already done so.⁵⁸ Marye expressed the hope that “in the future . . . , and to the profit of our [French] industrial arts, . . . it will be done again soon and more completely,”⁵⁹ and he noted that “this first exhibition gives a sufficient survey to propagate taste for an art neglected until the present, and whose study must be profitable for our decorative arts by knowledge of forgotten technical processes and of an aesthetic that is often poorly understood.”⁶⁰

The Pavillon de Marsan, located adjacent to the Palais des Tuileries, became the temporary site of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 1905. Before that the museum, founded by l'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs and supported by private initiative, had been housed at the Palais d'Industrie. Until 1905, the Pavillon de Marsan was used only for temporary exhibitions. The 1903 Exhibition of Muslim Art shared the same mission as other projects sponsored by l'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, basically to “affirm the prestige of French craftsmanship.”⁶¹ The organization's objective was achieved through a series of exhibitions as well as publications. For example, beginning in late 1880s the union published the journal *Revue des Arts Décoratifs* and a series of lavishly illustrated portfolio volumes on decorative art. The first, published in 1888–89, included five Islamic objects.⁶² The 1903 exhibition was commemorated by a deluxe tome that illustrated 100 objects from the exhibition,⁶³ the names of their owners appearing prominently along the lower edge of each sheet. And in describing the exhibition's func-

tion, Gaston Migeon noted that l'Union Centrale sought to educate decorative artists and craftsmen.

A thin handbook accompanying the exhibition contains a two-page list of lenders and an item-by-item description of its objects,⁶⁴ divided according to medium and arranged chronologically. Subdivisions follow a regional scheme. The exhibition was meant to be comprehensive in scope and to comply with categories of objects that had been already established.⁶⁵ Although several reviews were published, they say little about specific aspects of it: we find vague references to “well lit and justly proportioned rooms,” to “harmony everywhere.”⁶⁶ Migeon wrote two reviews of the exhibition. In the first, he charts the history of Islamic art exhibitions in Paris and praises the collectors who loaned objects before discussing specific objects.⁶⁷ “This exhibition's value,” he writes, “will be proven if it reveals to the public those pure marvels that are capable of enchanting the eyes, if it improves taste, and if it sensitizes them to the point that it makes any art lacking richness, decorative logic, fantasy and color, intolerable.”⁶⁸ The group of objects lent to the exhibition offered proof that “the cult of beautiful things is preserved intact in this city of taste.”⁶⁹ He refers to minor faults in the exhibition, but he does not say what they are and concludes that it was done with taste. His second review is a little more specific, contrasting the exhibitions of 1903 and 1893.⁷⁰ The objects on exhibit in 1893, he writes, did nothing more than “reveal an Orient that a slightly curious tourist could have known from the diverse bazaars of the Levant.”⁷¹ The 1903 exhibition avoided this fault by using only loans from private collectors who could contribute the most remarkable objects. Raymond Koechlin's review makes the same comparison and draws a similar conclusion.⁷² In 1893 it seemed that dealers, not amateurs, had made the majority of loans, but in 1903 “thanks to the willingness of collectors to open their display cabinets to the organizers,”⁷³ only top-quality *oeuvres d'art* had been lent. Koechlin assured his reader that no single collection had been beyond the organizer's reach.

In Migeon and Koechlin's assessments we discern a growing concern for the quality of the object and the implicit notion that the pedigree of ownership guaranteed it. The list of lenders at the beginning of

the catalogue stood as a record of their accomplishment, and absences from it signaled a failure to make the cut. The criteria of selection of objects for the exhibition, fictionally based on only the object's merit, in fact served as a way to underscore differences and hierarchies among members of collecting circles. Reviewers Migeon and Koechlin were also lenders, and despite their claims dealers also participated. The identification of dealers' names—perhaps mentioned here as amateurs and not vendors as a mark of distinction—nonetheless revealed the inevitable presence of the market.

THE EXHIBITION OF MUSLIM ART OF ALGIERS, ALGIERS, 1905

The Exhibition of Muslim Art was held in April 1905 in Algiers under the direction of Mr. Luciani, Director of Indigenous Affairs, and organized by Mr. Gsell. A madrasa was selected as the venue. A book published the next year, with an essay by Georges Marçais, served as a visual and textual record of the exhibition.⁷⁴ It contains numerous photographs of the installation and the objects exhibited.

According to Marçais, the exhibition's objective was to present industrial arts to the Algerian public and to those visiting Algiers for a Congress of Orientalists. In only a few weeks, Gsell was able to transform the madrasa's classrooms into a museum "where each technique, all the diverse styles of Maghribi industrial art were represented, grouped in a logical order, and where some beautiful examples of Oriental art allowed for interesting comparisons."⁷⁵ Thus, the bulk of objects originated in the Maghrib, with some objects produced in the farther-flung regions of the Islamic world. A list of lenders shows that most of the objects came from North African collections.

An additional description of the madrasa lays out its plan—a central courtyard covered by a dome, rooms circulating around it, with four domed units at the outer corners on the first floor and three rooms on a lower floor—and the rooms' contents. The central hall contained specimens from nearly all of the provinces of the Maghrib. Of the rooms that encircled it, two were devoted to embroidered thin stuffs and

velvets, the diverse aspects of Moroccan industry decorated a third, and Berber industry a fourth. Two other rooms displayed specimens of Oriental art lent by Algerian collectors. On the lower floor, the central room was decorated with carpets, and a second was devoted to the ceramic collection of Mr. Mermet, architect of the General Government, who arranged the collection himself. The third room, decorated with objects made in Europe and thought appropriate for a Maghribi audience (mirrors from Venice, wallpapers/hangings from Lyon and Gênes, a French clock decorated with turbans and scimitars), had an Arab concert installed in it.

Marçais thought that the room's disposition, by its form and decoration, offered a natural complement to the objects. Beneath the decoration of plaster in ivory tones (presumably the central dome) "with sober highlights of gold, vermilion, and azure, a softly tinted light brought out the richness of the old objects and brought excessive elements into harmony."⁷⁶ A detailed description of the other rooms follows,⁷⁷ and many of them are illustrated (see figs. 7–10). The exhibition followed a roughly regional organization, with most rooms showing objects in mixed media.

In its installation, little distinguishes the Algiers exhibition from Martin's of some years earlier. The central room (fig. 7), a survey of Maghribi art in its entirety, imposed certain restrictions on the arrangement of its objects; although its authentic context was a bonus, the desire to leave the architecture visible meant that objects needed to be confined in a range of vertical and horizontal cabinets. Banners, erected on poles, relieved the predominantly horizontal axis. The "Second Oriental Room" (fig. 8) made extensive use of the walls for a display of carpets from Asia Minor and Turkestan and textiles, with groups of arms hung against them. The undersides of the cabinets displayed more objects, and small items of portable furniture crept into the floor space. A cradle at the far end of the room was augmented by a heavily embroidered drape, and a large jardiniere from Turkey—loaded with flowers—occupied central stage. A lamp suspended from the ceiling was a modern copy of an original one.

In the "Berber Room" (fig. 9) another environment was created. The corner of the room was draped with woven and embroidered fabrics, and carpets

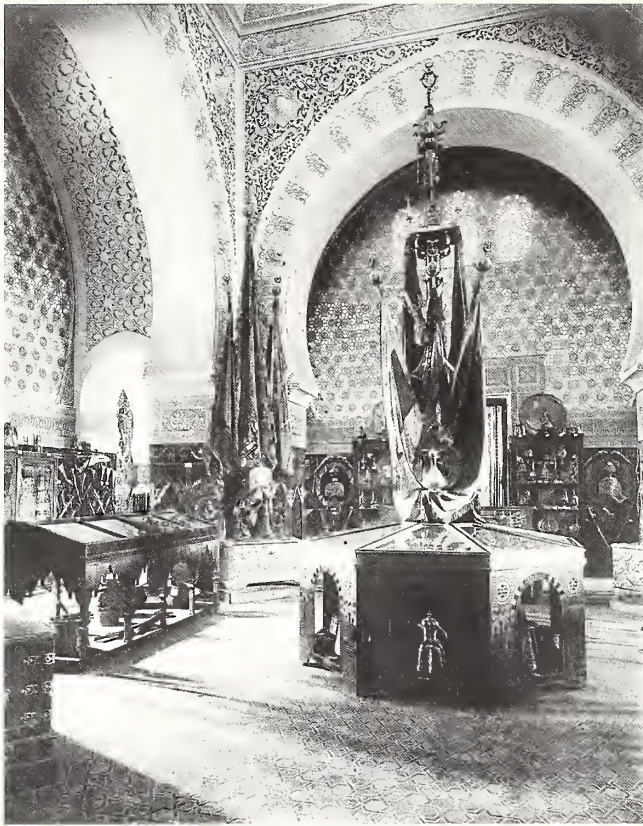


FIG. 7. "View of the Central Room," *Exhibition of Muslim Art of Algiers, Algiers, April 1905*. Photo: Cliché Famin, published by A. Fontemoing. After Marçais, *L'Exposition d'Art Musulman d'Alger*, pl. I.

were laid across the floor. Nothing stood in the way of the visitor's touch, so a small plaque hung at the left served as a warning. The drapes, placed on the wall without regard to original function, united old and new to invoke an authentic domestic context.⁷⁸ Another image, a close-up portraying "Portable Objects and Metalwork" (fig. 10), arranged furniture and embroidered textiles as a tableau to contain and display objects. The vignette has all the informality of a domestic scene, albeit a method of arranging and viewing Islamic art that was generated in France and then projected back onto the colony.⁷⁹ This photograph encapsulates the major issue about the exhibition in Algiers, basically that it was a fiat exhibition in which the episteme of the universal exposition was exported to France's colony, one through which the artistic products of the Maghrib's provinces, in a form of inversion, acquired definition. Thus, although the installation techniques are related to those that we have already seen, the exhibition's physical context gave them an entirely different charge.

EXHIBITION OF MASTERPIECES OF MUHAMMEDAN ART, MUNICH, 1910

The Exhibition of Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art, Munich, 1910, is perhaps the best documented

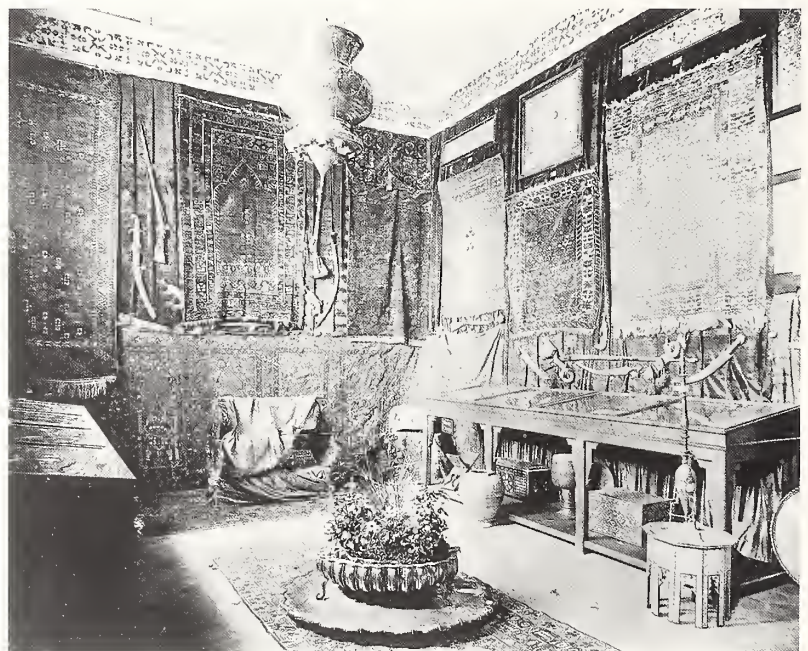


FIG. 8. "View of the Second Oriental Room," *Exhibition of Muslim Art of Algiers, Algiers, April 1905*. Photo: Cliché Famin, published by A. Fontemoing. After Marçais, *L'Exposition d'Art Musulman d'Alger*, pl. XXI.

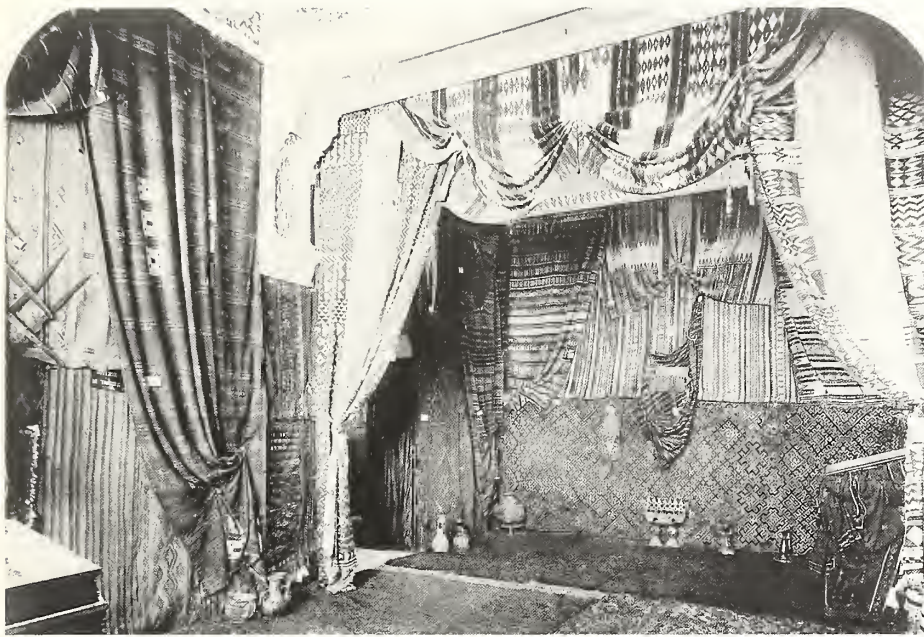


FIG. 9. "View of the Berber Room," Exhibition of Muslim Art of Algiers, Algiers, April 1905. Photo: Cliché Famin, published by A. Fontemoing. After Marçais, *L'Exposition d'Art Musulman d'Alger*, pl. XVII.



FIG. 10. "Portable Objects and Metalwork," Exhibition of Muslim Art of Algiers, Algiers, April 1905. Photo: Cliché Famin, published by A. Fontemoing. After Marçais, *L'Exposition d'Art Musulman d'Alger*, pl. X.

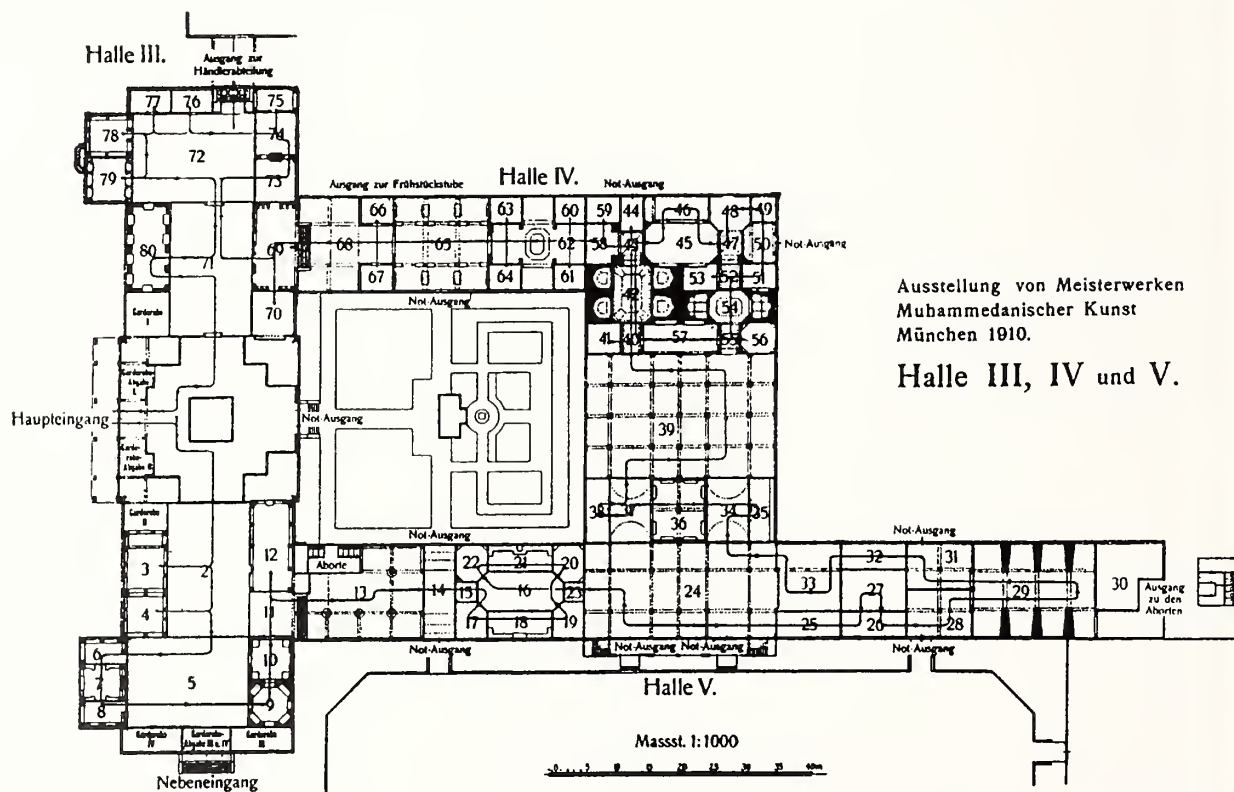
of early exhibitions. An unillustrated guidebook published in conjunction with the exhibition⁸⁰ had an introduction by Hugo von Tschudi, director of the exhibition committee. In it he offered the reader a brief summary of "Muhammedan" art and laid down some themes that were central to the emerging scholarly discourse on Islamic art—for instance, the high esteem accorded to calligraphy, the preponderance of ornament, the predominantly aniconic nature of

the art tradition.⁸¹ Von Tschudi also noted that visitors to the contemporary Middle East would only be disappointed by the objects they would find in the great bazaars of Oriental cities, goods whose artistic value was not proportionate to that of their forebears.⁸² He considered this modern "bric-a-brac" as a culprit of sorts for it had spoiled (*verdorben*; also polluted) the educated person's pleasure in Oriental art.⁸³ The best of Islamic art was not to be found in

Oriental bazaars but in the *Schatzkammern* of European churches or in princely collections accumulated over centuries, some objects acquired through gift.⁸⁴ A small number of objects were still to be found in the Orient, but their rarity and value on the European art market were long recognized by the "Oriental." Von Tschudi observed that in his time they were becoming rarer—fewer and fewer objects entered private and public collections through the great art markets of Paris and London.⁸⁵ Presumably, the Munich exhibition would try to counter these impressions of Islamic art. Von Tschudi stated that the exhibition's objectives were quite plainly to work out the artistic relevance of Islamic art, to widen exposure to it and alter the perception of those who did not appreciate it, as well as to demonstrate "that the creation of Muhammedan art deserves a place equal to that of other cultural periods, and because of its harmony of color and mastery of ornament it is particularly suitable to give new stimuli to modern artistic creativity and perhaps show it a new path."⁸⁶

The guidebook's numbered floor plan keyed the

descriptions of each object to their appropriate room, and a red line superimposed over the plan guided the visitor in a one-way system through rooms numbered 1 to 80 located in interconnected exhibition halls 3, 4, and 5 (fig. 11). The catalogue proper was divided according to medium;⁸⁷ within each category divisions were made according to region, and within each region according to chronology. Private collectors and dealers lent the majority of the 3,553 objects.⁸⁸ A trades' show (in hall 2) and exhibition of old and new musical instruments (in hall 1) coincided with the exhibition of Islamic art. Represented at the trade show were several firms and antique dealers,⁸⁹ their wares set in a space designed and directed by the architect Herbert and Kurz.⁹⁰ Elsewhere at Bavaria Park and North Park,⁹¹ the theater hall, and in the bazaar and café buildings were contemporary sculptures, paintings, and photographs. The commercial adjunct to the show is underscored by numerous advertisements taken out by firms in the back portion of the exhibition guide. Indeed, the guidebook's inside cover bore the printed image of a tasseled carpet



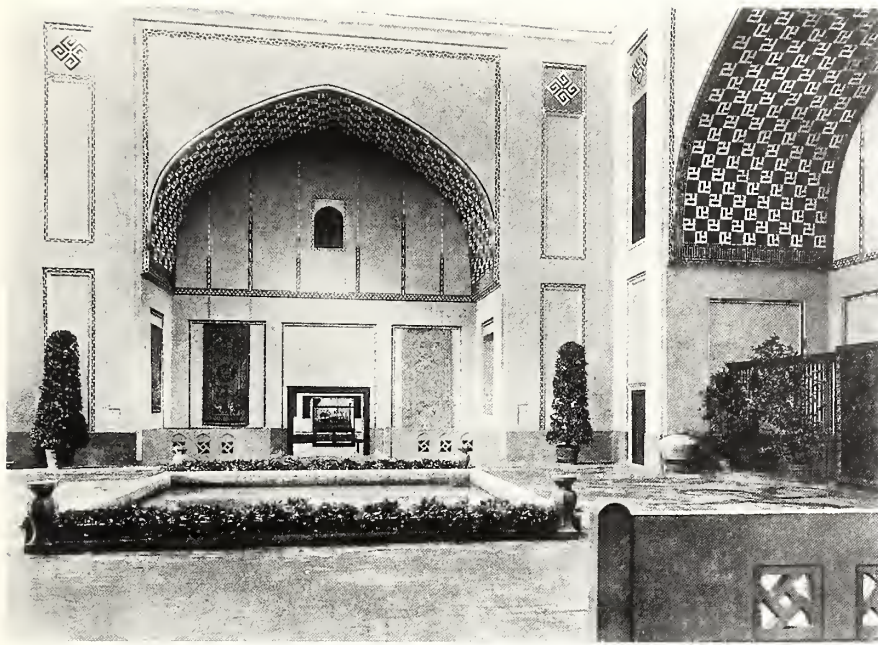


FIG. 12. "Court of Honor," room no. 1, Exhibition of Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art, Munich, 1910. Photo: F. Bruckmann A.-G., Munich. After Sarre and Martin, *Ausstellung von Meisterwerken Muhammedanischer Kunst*, 1:1.

with a legend reserved in white: "L. Bernheimer, Munich, Lenbachplatz 3. First and oldest import house of Oriental carpets in south Germany. Distinguished collection of 16th and 17th century Carpets. Imported directly from the Orient."

The guide is equally informative about the cast of figures responsible for the installation of the Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art exhibition.⁹² Technical and architectural aspects were processed through the Building Office of the Munich Exhibition, 1910. Artistic direction was provided by Becker; general room layout by Rehlen; von Miller handled the architecture of the single rooms; separate designs and the decorative arrangement of the "Court of Honor" ("Ehrenraumes," no. 1; fig. 12) were by Fiechter.

The guidebook does not contain photographs documenting the installation, nor is there an explicit statement about the exhibition's principles of organization. These would come two years later in a copiously illustrated and monumental four-volume work.⁹³ Here Friedrich Sarre composed the foreword, perhaps in response to the scathing critiques by French reviewers of the 1910 exhibition, to which we will return later. Several scholars/collectors/epigraphists wrote expanded entries for the objects as well as introductory essays to each section divided by medium.⁹⁴ Three photographs accompany Sarre's introductory statement, giving some idea of the installation. One is the

so-called Court of Honor (fig. 12),⁹⁵ designed as a courtyard enclosed by four shallow iwans, with a pool at its center. Tiled areas animated the interior, and borders accentuated recessed niches and produced smaller units within large continuous surfaces. Low balustrades, picking up the tile pattern of the walls, mediated the floor spaces of court and iwan. Potted trees and plants added further vertical and horizontal axes to the space. This first space, with its architecture and décor evocative of a mosque courtyard, was the exception and aimed to create architectonic values attempted in two other rooms (nos. 39 and 72).

Approximately halfway through the exhibition's eighty rooms the visitor arrived at a columned hall with a low ceiling (room no. 39; fig. 13). The central area of the room, a rectangle defined by fifteen load-bearing columns, was given over to carpets laid on the floor and cordoned off from the perimeter. Carpets were accompanied by mosque furniture, including a Qur'ān stand (*kursi*) and a Qur'ān storage box. The perimeter wall was lined with carpets and carved plaques set into the wall. Two large panels, lit from behind, contained stucco window frames made up of pieces of colored glass. Another room, no. 72 (fig. 14) on the floor plan, showed mainly arms and armor, textiles (banners and wall hangings), with carpets used to form backdrops. Analysis of the guidebook's list of objects indicates that, although

FIG. 13. "Hall of Columns," room no. 39, *Exhibition of Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art, Munich, 1910*. Photo: F. Bruckmann A.-G., Munich. After Sarre and Martin, *Ausstellung von Meisterwerken Muhammedanischer Kunst*, 1:2.

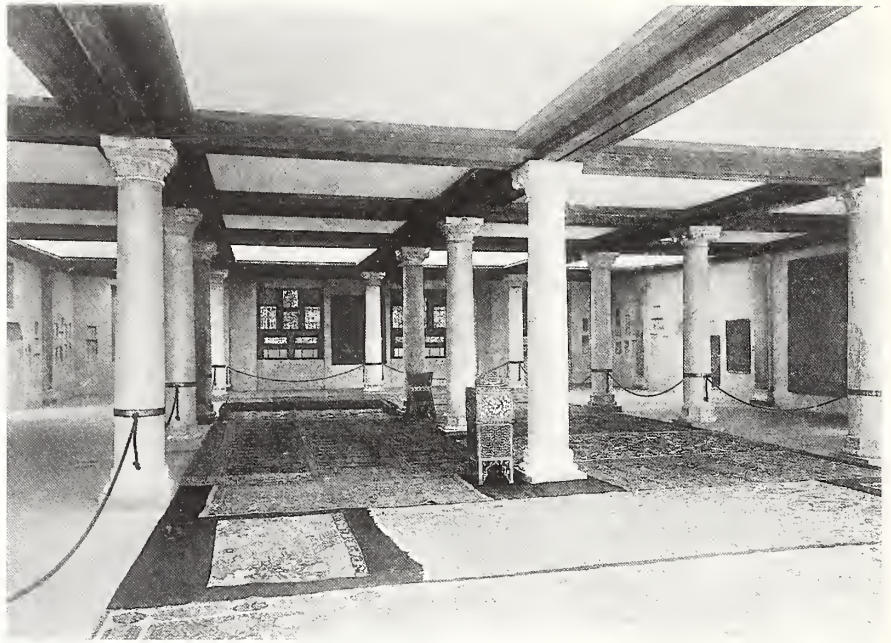
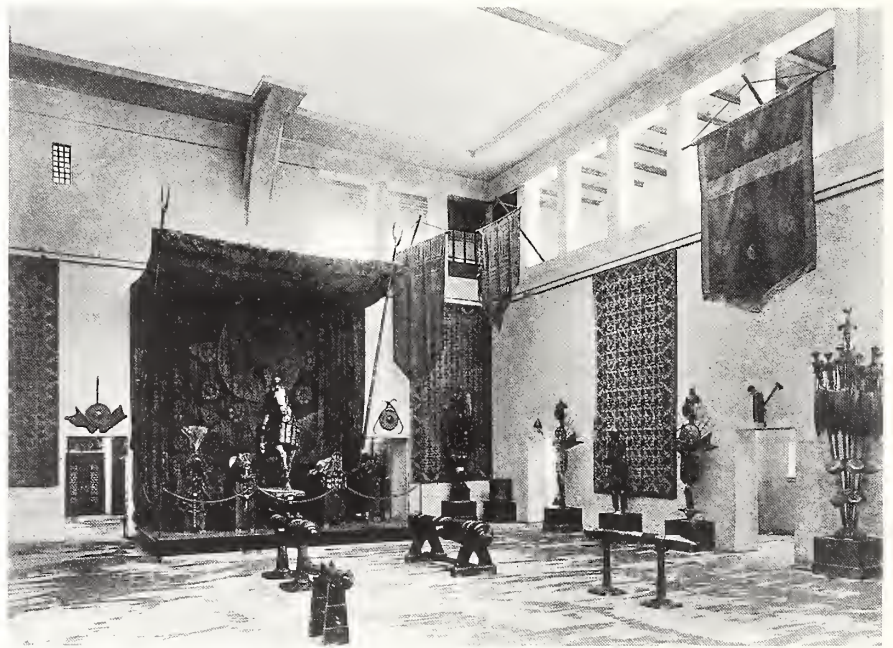


FIG. 14. "Armory," room no. 72, *Exhibition of Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art, Munich, 1910*. Photo: F. Bruckmann A.-G., Munich. After Sarre and Martin, *Ausstellung von Meisterwerken Muhammedanischer Kunst*, 1:3.



there were concentrations of specific media in certain rooms, most rooms contained a variety of objects. The installation photographs reveal a measured, steady procession of objects, a drastically thinned out version of those museological techniques applied previously to display Islamic art. At Munich, wall and floor space opened up to allow the objects room to breathe. Rooms were arranged according to region, and within those categories subdivided according to technique.⁹⁶

Sarre's foreword to the exhibition's commemorative publication, written in Berlin in October 1911, deals with the architecture and principles of installation. One passage deserves to be quoted in full:

The architectural design of the exhibition space stemmed from the municipal building commissioner Rehlen and his assistant Ruppert von Miller; Professor Bruno Becker assumed the artistic design. Only a few rooms showed a stronger

influence of Oriental architectural form, such as a hall of columns and armory and the entrance hall by Dr. Ernst Fiechter, effectively designed as a mosque courtyard, and displaying as a Court of Honor the carpets of the Residenz. The other halls, designed in contemporary fashion, were not always well received; with their white ornamentless walls, the loosely executed exhibition did not follow traditional principles of interior painting. A certain sobriety of the rooms, the lack of color effects and lack of fantastic accumulations, the attempt to have the art works impress merely through their quality: all this may have been emphasized somewhat crudely here and there, as one [exhibition organizer] intentionally declared war against the popular understanding of Oriental art, against the fairytale splendor and bazaar commodities.⁹⁷

Here Sarre refers to the pared down installation aesthetic. White walls and the sober disposition of objects would counter those techniques of contextualization that relied on the effect of accumulation. The aesthetic value of the latter conjured Orientalist images of the bazaar that were in turn imbued with commercial associations.

The exhibition seems to have passed without much comment in Germany,⁹⁸ and reviews of it in England focus on its contents and the implications of their study. Writing for the *Burlington Magazine*,⁹⁹ Roger Fry discusses the unclear art historical transition from Greek and Roman civilizations to medieval art and notes that the role played by Islamic art is far greater than heretofore considered. Fry says nothing about the installation. The French, however, were extremely vocal.

The reviews of Gaston Migeon and Raymond Koechlin are especially detailed in their criticism. Migeon begins his essay with an overview of exhibitions of Islamic art, noting how the incomplete shows of the 1880s and the 1890s culminated in 1903 at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.¹⁰⁰ He continues by identifying the roles played by von Tschudi, Martin, and Sarre, as well as their collaborators (who worked to secure loans for the exhibition), and then absolves them: they played no part in the exhibition's installation. Sarre had done more than anyone in Ger-

many to promote Islamic art by "his intelligent propaganda." Migeon then weighs in on the installation:

Why did they have to compromise such courageous efforts and so many marvelous objects by the most perfect incoherence and aggravating absence of taste in ordering the exhibition and in presenting its items? I am not speaking of the exhibition building—it was imposed upon them, the type of building that looks like a hangar or caravanserai—a complete absence of a logical preliminary plan, sometimes rooms are enormous and sometimes narrow and restricted. The objects, dispersed at random and without well-considered groupings, could not lend themselves to any comparative study, and it was not possible to make a challenge, to assert the need for intelligent orderings, because they were thrown pell-mell into formless boxes that one would not have been able to call display cases: and when there was an effort to put things in order, it was to culminate in showing extraordinary enameled glass, such precious objects, in a wall recess, in a cage whose uprights had been sawn from planks of packing crates (as a background, the wall rough-cast with a coat of whitewash), and flanked by two poor little green bushes trimmed like cypress to recall the delicacy of the Generalife in Granada. I have heard it said "one didn't want to make *The Thousand and One Nights*" . . . Oh! no! that they should have been so fearful of it. The silliness of this point, affected and voluntary, resulted in the most offensive pretense, and only the supreme beauty of the items that it offers for view can pardon the interior decorators of Munich for their absolute ineptitude in creating harmony around the objects. . . . That said, it would be ridiculous to waste time on further criticism of this sort in the face of the masterpieces that are on show.¹⁰¹

Migeon's vituperative critique speaks for itself. Koechlin's review also sets the exhibition in a historical context by briefly referring to earlier ones, and, in a language reminiscent of national rivalry so characteristic of the universal expositions, he notes the particularly strong turnout of Germany, France, Austria,

Russia, Sweden, Turkey, Egypt, and England.¹⁰² Koechlin also highlights the “lack of taste demonstrated by the installation and the sadness of its disposition,” which immediately strike the visitor. He mentions the caprice of the exhibition’s conception and notes that he is not referring to the “strangeness of style in the rooms’ interior architecture . . . to which contemporary German art has become attached” but “to the vexing effect of simplicity that this whitewash of milky lime spread evenly over the walls and the shocking disparity between this poverty and the splendor of carpets which hang everywhere.” He then turns to the display cases. Koechlin considers the freestanding display cabinet to be the most logical type for it permits its objects to be viewed from different angles, but in this exhibition he counted no more than ten freestanding cases. Rather, the organizers showed a “bizarre preference” for recesses in the wall covered over by sheets of glass fastened by nails or “display cases set at too deep an angle and poorly lit, and whose heavy mountings further increased the sense of sadness.” The sumptuous objects lost their impact; the “graceless wooden frames crushed the marvels that they confined.”¹⁰³

The sadness of the exhibition was augmented by the principle of arrangement “in a dispersed order” (*en ordre dispersé*);¹⁰⁴ Koechlin counts twenty-four rooms in the exhibition building and wonders why they were all used.¹⁰⁵ Some rooms were virtually empty of display cases, and some cases contained very few objects. The sparseness was especially problematic for pieces of secondary interest—the installation technique only drew attention to their mediocrity. In a fit of nostalgia, he recalled the extraordinary effect created at the Pavillon de Marsan, mentioning in particular the inlaid bronzes and textiles: “the same pieces are at Munich, but one must hunt to catch sight of them; no more titillation of colors, no more feasting for the eyes.”¹⁰⁶

A third review, written by Marcel Montadon,¹⁰⁷ adopts a different tone, congratulating the installers for overcoming the detrimental effects of light and atmosphere in Munich. Montadon did not share the impression of sadness and boredom voiced by others “before these beautiful white walls.” Mentioning the placement of carpets on the ground, he commented, “what could come closer to an oriental inter-

rior, mosque or palace, and consequently be more suggestive.”¹⁰⁸ His subsequent remarks are of paramount importance:

Those who are not accustomed to the Secessionist mode of exhibition rooms—which is generally adopted today in Germany and Austria—could also figure out that the Munich organizers tried to deceive appearances by the distribution and dispersal of objects to give the impression of a multitude in rooms that are more or less empty.¹⁰⁹

Montadon is the only reviewer to make a connection between the Munich exhibition’s installation and the exhibition aesthetic advanced by the Secessionists (the strongest parallels are to the Vienna Secession, particularly after 1900), clearly antithetical to most of the other French reviewers.¹¹⁰

In defense of Becker, Rehlen, von Miller, and Fiechter, Montadon concluded that their chief goal had been to organize a study exhibition (*étude*: also research), despite the fact that one could choose to criticize them for neglecting the artistic aspect. The objects, “arranged in a framework more or less identical to that to which they are accustomed, and without ceasing to give the eye pleasure, were proffered above all else to instruct the visitors, the majority of whom were absolute laymen.”¹¹¹ In bringing his introductory remarks to a close, Montadon notes that most of the studies of the exhibition acknowledged that the

time has passed for heaving exclamations of romantic enthusiasm before the richness, colors, and fantasy of Oriental products. Rather, the time has come to do justice to artists who were perfectly competent in their art, whose manual dexterity, acquired through the practice of properly observed rules, did nothing less than offer a highly developed sense of composition, mathematical or picturesque, and a sense of beauty that we have not had in our education. In leaving the exhibition one could not help being affected by a new admiration for these people, who have been naively accused of barbarism and who knew how to push their civilization to the marvelous blossoming of art summarized therein.¹¹²

What had been attempted at Munich was nothing less than the reorientation of a cultural mindset toward Islamic art. Through the alteration of the spatial environment in which objects were encountered, and by their distribution through that space, specific Orientalist tropes were avoided—the bazaar and the fairytale—and a new function was inscribed into the order, the use of objects to narrate a history of art (even if the latter was somewhat poorly actualized).

CONCLUSION

The essays about Islamic art and reviews of its exhibition reveal a consistent level of consciousness about the “history” of Islamic exhibitions in this formative period. Introductions to exhibition reviews of Islamic art typically mention the locations and years of earlier shows, usually couched in statements that convey the writer’s gentle excitement and enthusiasm for the emerging field and the growth of interest in it. Although exhibition organizers are more or less explicit in describing their goals, by the turn of the century new concerns emerge in the display of Islamic art. Although the first hints are provided as early as 1893 in Marye’s review of the Paris exhibition of the same year, they are surely given their clearest formulation at Munich in 1910.

The earliest exhibitions of Islamic art appeared in the context of the universal exposition, and although others were held beyond the exposition context, various features of its exhibitionary technique and its framework were retained. Indeed, the collector’s practice was defined in part by the encyclopedic scope of the universal exposition—individual objects derived their significance from their relation to other objects of the same material or typological category, and sets of categorized materials established their meaning in relation to other sets.¹¹³ This form of episteme, of knowledge by taxonomy, provided a structure for Islamic objects and a method for its display derived from nineteenth-century empiricism that was also reflected in the emerging and increasingly nuanced realm of the commodity.

In a manner comparable to vanguard artists worried by market forces and the commodity fetish, amateurs wished to differentiate the quality of their col-

lections from those of parvenus. They now faced the growing reality that collecting was available to a broader clientele. In Zola’s novel the fictional character Mouret would make carpets available to a wider group than ever before; department stores sold Japonneries and Turqueries (see fig. 15). In order to maintain the distinction, and to remain above and beyond the fray, exhibition organizers depended upon the loans of distinguished collectors whose dispositions, highly developed taste, and sensorial refinement would guarantee the quality of the objects they lent. References to low-grade production in contemporary Islamic countries and to the depletion of antique objects from their bazaars conjured an image of Europe as *refugium* of all that was valuable. Collectors had their objects. At the same time, nations vied for archaeological privileges in Islamic countries—more objects were to be found below ground. Digging and sifting were required. Evidence of a collector’s refinement was publicized and disseminated through descriptions of his carefully orchestrated domestic spaces, which were, in essence, nondiscursive spaces for the eye’s contemplation. But the collector’s creativity did not always end with the act of assembling an aestheticized interior space. For a select few, like Henri Vever, these environments were used for artistic inspiration, and their purpose exceeded the role of adjunct to a wealthy lifestyle. By rather complex mechanisms, a cast of collectors/dealers/scholars/curators (roles that were not mutually exclusive) worked together to promote and enhance the value of objects that they considered sorely neglected, and together they jump-started a market. Given the newness of it all, the power of their self-reinforcing formula is quite striking.¹¹⁴

Although the amateur tried to distinguish the objects in his collection from ordinary commodities (exhibited in such contexts as the universal exposition and the commercial gallery), this was only achieved by limiting access and by the ever more dizzying heights of connoisseurship. The techniques of installation used in the amateur’s home resonated with the authentic, spectacular, and densely crowded aspects of commercial spaces. And although collectors took pride in their simple and unpretentious natures, they used their objects as an expression of social accomplishment and affluence. The *savant*



FIG. 15. Japanese lacquered objects at Charles Jenner & Company (department store), Edinburgh, Scotland, 1895. Crown Copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Photo: Bedford Lemere.

désordre of their interiors seduced viewers by the semblance of informality, but early on this technique was appropriated by the department store (fig. 16), where it was exploited to rouse the shopper's desire.¹¹⁵ The marketing power of interior design and display was quickly realized. The aesthetic of bourgeois life could be transferred to a public setting, F. R. Martin's exhibition being one good example. At the macro-level of the total environment of the room and the micro-level of the single display case, the objects and their installation could invoke the collector's domestic space. A lifestyle was on sale.

But legibility of intention remained of paramount concern, especially when similar installation and display techniques were used in a variety of contexts—the trappings of the amateur's life had been mimicked and appropriated in retail contexts. To some, the amateur's refined and harmonious groups of objects, which always privileged the object's formal and material properties, were opaque; all that the

viewer could see was an excessive accumulation of objects densely arranged. The associative value of these artful piles was a straightforward Orientalism, tableaux refigured from *The Thousand and One Nights* and visible in such contexts as the department store and the universal exposition. It is this Orientalist value that Marye signals as early as 1893 and that Munich attempted to avoid. At Munich, the organizers tried to assemble comprehensive sequences of media, to marshal various forms of textual evidence, to summarize knowledge with a single-minded art historical and scientific bent, and to escape the contextualization of objects in an exhibitionary setting that conjured retail spaces and that reinforced Orientalist visions of non-Western culture. The Munich exhibition's installers employed techniques associated with the Secession to assert the autonomy of the historical work of art, to free it up from market forces. While some of the older values—the aesthetic pleasure of “decorative” art and its curative potential for

contemporary art—were retained, its perception as a minor art in relation to major media (e.g., easel painting) was to be altered, and the underlying principles of Islamic art were to be uncovered. The art historical framework pursued by the organizers aimed at the classification of material properties and formal elements for separate media. The installation techniques of Munich—thinned out sequences of objects that can be contemplated singly and without having to compete with others and the choice of white for the walls—were highly influential. The majority of permanent museum installations, particularly in America, employed them.

During the period between 1880 and 1910, then, many of the dilemmas that curators face today had already been confronted. One of these dilemmas is how objects should be contextualized in an exhibition and what or whose narratives these installations will produce (the curator's agency has become even more layered and difficult to negotiate in the postcolonial period). Two late nineteenth-century authors highlight aspects of the dilemma. Although Henri Lavoix's essay of 1885, about the Oriental objects in Albert Goupil's collection, made a historical maneuver by referring to a primary text—his choice being *Murūj al-dhahab* (Meadows of Gold) by the tenth-century historian Mas'udi—the passages that he adduced only highlighted the commonly held view of Islamic art's fantastic and opulent qualities.¹¹⁶ Historical objects could be seen through this history and through the descriptions presented in *The Thousand and One Nights*. Lavoix's proposition raises the question of which texts the historian adduces as evidence and the response to the filters through which one must read the text; are these filters (points of view or ideologies) embraced or exposed? Another, written by Henry Wallis in 1894 on luster wall tiles, might be interpreted today as establishing an opposition between the historicist recovery of context and the essentializing concept of the work as aesthetic emanation existing beyond time and contingency:

They come as a revelation of a lost art, redolent of the romance of the East; as such they will be accepted, few perhaps caring to have their enjoyment disturbed by questions of history or derivation. The absorption of one boy in the



FIG. 16. *Children's Toy Bazaar at Charles Jeuner & Company (department store), Edinburgh, Scotland, 1895. Crown Copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Photo: Bedford Levere. After Artley, Golden Age of Shop Design, pp. 2–3.*

"Arabian Nights" is a far keener delight than that of the man delving into Lane's "Notes," even although they contain a mine of invaluable information. Something of the boy's delight in the marvelous is possible in the present instance, and therefore in introducing to the connoisseur and the student these relics of the past our remarks shall be of the briefest.¹¹⁷ □

Notes

A debt of gratitude is owed to Mary Clare Altenhofen, Research Librarian, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University, for solving reference problems and for tracking down obscure copyright

permissions; and to Colleen Hennessey, Archivist of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., for locating visual and textual documents and suggesting additional materials. I would also like to thank András Riedlmayer (AKPIA, Harvard University) and David Karmon for their help with research. Unless stated otherwise all translations are mine.

1. Emile Zola, *Ladies' Delight*, trans. April Fitzlyon (London: John Calder, 1957), 87–88. For original French text, see Emile Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (Lausanne: Henri Jaunin, n.d.), 122–23.

2. Marrey suggests that Au Bonheur des Dames may be modeled after the Parisian department store La Paix but notes that Zola borrowed his ideas from many contemporary stores. Bernard Marrey, *Les grands magasins des origines à 1939* (Paris: Librairie Picard, 1979), 53.

3. Zola, *Ladies' Delight*, trans. Fitzlyon, 51.

4. Zola focuses mainly on the impact that retail strategies had on women, an effect consciously addressed by Mouret. See Zola, *Ladies' Delight*, trans. Fitzlyon, 77. For a study of gender and the department store, see Lisa Tiertsen, "Marianne in the Department Store: Gender and Politics of Consumption in Turn-of-the-Century Paris," in *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850–1939*, ed. Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 1999), 116–34.

5. After the description of the carpets, the narrative moves on to Denise's arrival at the store to begin work at 8 o'clock one Monday morning. She was "flabbergasted, no longer recognizing the entrance of the shop, and the finishing touches put to her confusion by this harem scene set up at the door" (Zola, *Ladies' Delight*, trans. Fitzlyon, 88). Slightly later in the novel a group of ladies are leaving the store, having met in the Oriental hall: "They were leaving, but they did so in a burst of voluble admiration. Even Madame Guibal was waxing enthusiastic. 'Oh! It's delightful! One feels one's actually there!' 'Yes, a real harem, isn't it? And not expensive!' Look at the ones from Smyrna, ah! those from Smyrna! What shades, what delicacy!'" (Zola, *Ladies' Delight*, trans. Fitzlyon, 114).

6. Numerous statements in the scholarship try to adjust the hierarchical ordering implicit in the distinction between "fine" and "industrial" art. See, for example, Gustave LeBon, "Les arts arabes," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 2nd series, 28 (1883): 502–20. According to LeBon, "with the Arabs, art is found everywhere," and even in furniture the most "insignificant details are worked out" (p. 512). A. de Champeaux considered the distinction between "great" art and "decorative" art to be entirely modern and more "conventional than actual" (id., *Portefeuille des arts décoratifs* [Paris: Librairie des Arts Décoratifs, 1888–89], i). Even in the first major handbook (*Manuel d'art musulman*, 2 vols. [Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1907]), by Henri Saladin (vol. 1) and Gaston Migeon (vol. 2), the second volume bore the subtitle *Les arts plastiques et*

industriels. The word *art* could not stand on its own but required a qualifier.

7. This was one of the principal rationales behind the foundation of the South Kensington Museum, London (renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899). Its collections would serve as an example of the world's arts and crafts and, by providing models, inspire greater quality in industrially produced commodities. In 1903 Gaston Migeon wrote of the advantage in studying Islamic objects at a time when modern art "seems to have surrendered itself to all of the hazards of ruleless improvisation" (id., "L'exposition des arts musulmans à l'Union centrale des arts décoratifs," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 3rd series, 29 [1903]: 351–68, 368).

8. For example, Henry Wallis writes: "New ideas are unsettling ancient traditions. Old things are passing away and among them those splendid arts that made the land glorious, and whose memory at least deserves permanent record. On the banks of the Ecbosz are rising palaces of modern European architecture; and in Persia, as elsewhere, the taste for cheap finery and tawdry magnificence, being once acquired, the demolition of the ancient world will proceed apace" (Burlington Fine Arts Club, *Catalogue of Specimens Illustrative of Persian and Arab Art Exhibited in 1885*, intro. Henry Wallis [London: printed for the Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1885], xvi). The collector and dealer Hakky-Bey also commented on the decadence of contemporary artistic production in Islamic countries after observing that all art traditions have their great periods (id., "Introduction," *Le miroir de l'art musulman: Revue mensuelle & illustrée consacrée à l'étude de l'art musulman* 2 [April 1898]: 27). The usage of the adjective *Oriental* encompasses the art of Islamic countries (in North Africa and Asia) as well as art from India, China, and Japan.

9. It is important to note that the term *Islamic* only became common in the early years of the twentieth century, although it is used throughout this essay for the sake of convenience. A racially and geographically derived nomenclature was used before that time (Arab, Persian, Turkish), or the term *Saracenic*, which attempted to convey the fact of a multiracial and multiconfessional society with the general senses of "eastern" and "medieval." The latter was advanced by Stanley Lane-Poole in 1886; Saracenic was a style within which regional modifications occurred (id., *The Art of the Saracens in Egypt* [London: Chapman and Hall, 1886], v–vi). Henry Wallis contested the undifferentiated title "Arab" art, noting, "Modern writers qualify the art produced in Persia, Egypt and the countries under Mohammedan rule as 'Arab,' forgetting that the evidences of an Arab art, other than that on a par with the abortive attempts of uncultured savages generally, have never existed," and concludes, "so the art of the various Muslim countries should bear the appellation of their separate nationalities" (id., *The Godman Collection: Persian Ceramic Art in the Collection of Mr. F. DuCane Godman, F.R.S: The Thirteenth-Century Lustered Vases* [London: published privately, 1891], 9). The Exhibition of Muslim Art in Paris, 1893, caused some consternation because of its very title, the collectors who had loaned objects protesting against the use of the term and not the usual designation "Arab art." For discussion of

the debate and an explanation of the term *Muslim art*, see Georges Marye, "L'Exposition d'Art Musulman (premier article)," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 3rd series, 10 (1893): 490–99, 490.

10. Burlington Fine Arts Club, *Catalogue of Specimens*.

11. The exhibition brought together carpets from the collections of the Austrian Royal Treasuries, private collectors, museums, and various dealers. A massive three-volume publication was produced after the exhibition (Imperial and Royal Austrian Commercial Museum, *Oriental Carpets*, English edition ed. C. Purdon Clarke, 3 vols. [Vienna, 1892–93]). The copiously illustrated publication was intended to serve as a record of the 1891 exhibition. Various authorities contributed to it, and their essays covered the history of carpet production in North Africa, Anatolia, the Middle East, and India. Some of the essays were accompanied by ethnographic photographs depicting nomadic encampments and looms with weavers. The essay by Purdon Clarke mentions the 1891 exhibition and the attempts made to sort material into groups according to the carpets' stylistic features, as well as technical and material aspects (*Oriental Carpets*, vol. 1, pt. 2).

12. The field is well served by a list of exhibitions of Islamic painting between 1900 and 1981: Nasrin Rohani, *A Bibliography of Persian Miniature Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1981), 145–49. Unfortunately, nothing comparable exists for mixed media exhibitions or for those of the nineteenth century. For a brief factual narrative of nineteenth- and twentieth-century museums, exhibitions, and collections/collectors, see *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 16, s. v. "Islamic Art, §XI 1–2, §XII 1–2, and §XIII 1–2" (London: Macmillan, 1996).

13. Martha Ward noted that specialized techniques of display "began to develop only toward the end of the century and then primarily for shop merchandise" (ead., "Impressionist Installations and Private Exhibitions," *Art Bulletin* 73, 4 [1991]: 599–622, 599). She also suggested that specific practices and innovations of exhibitions "seem to have been prompted by intuitive judgments about the social connotations of a variety of spaces and audiences and about the appropriate place and role of art in relation to each" (p. 599).

14. Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), esp. introduction.

15. For a study of the exhibition and production of nineteenth-century modernism, see Yve-Alain Bois, "Exposition: Esthétique de la distinction, espace de démonstration," *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* 29 (Fall 1989): 57–79. For an excellent study of nineteenth-century independent exhibitions, see Ward, "Impressionist Installations and Private Exhibitions," 599–622.

16. Among the earliest public collections of Islamic art in Europe were those in London, the earliest perhaps being the Brit-

ish Museum (opened in 1759; the Department of Oriental Antiquities was founded in 1861). The South Kensington Museum exhibited Oriental Art in 1861, followed in 1886 by the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. The museum purchased a collection of Persian art in 1876 from Colonel Murdoch Smith. In either 1889 or 1893, the institution published two portfolios of materials in its permanent collection, the *Portfolio of Oriental Art* and *Portfolio of Persian Art*.

London also had a share of nineteenth-century exhibitions beyond the confines of the public museum, at both temporary venues (e.g., the Oriental and Turkish Museum, St. George's Gallery, Hyde Park Corner, summer 1854), and institutions with their own collections (e.g., The East India House Museum, founded in 1858; when the new India House was built in 1865, the collection went into storage). For an encyclopedic treatment of London's exhibitions, see Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978).

17. The display of old and new products from Islamic countries and their architectural contexts—as single pavilions or as fabricated urban quarters (e.g., the "Rue de Caire" at the 1889 Paris exposition; the "Camp of Damascus Colony" at the World's Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, 1893; and the Tunisian souk in the 1900 Paris exposition)—have been the subject of several studies, including: Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), esp. chaps. 1–3; and William Schneider, "Colonies at the 1900 World Fair," *History Today* 31 (May 1981): 31–36.

18. On the interrelation between museum and imperialist and colonialist projects, see Tim Barringer's essay, "The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project," in *Colonialism and the Object*, ed. Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 11–27.

19. See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). For a more recent study of the nature/culture opposition established through the "symmetry" of New York City's American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, respectively, see Mieke Bal, "Telling, Showing, Showing Off," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Spring 1992): 556–94.

20. The field's "self-diagnosis" is a process still in its early stages. A conference at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 16–18 October 1996, sought to explore aspects of the discipline's formation. See Stephen Vernoit, ed., *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2000). Some notable exceptions that outline specific aspects in the history of Islamic collecting include: J. M. Rogers, *Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman Art from the Collection of Nasser D. Khalili* (Geneva, London, and Oxford: Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, the Nour Foundation, and Azimuth Editions, 1995),

15–23; Stuart Cary Welch, “Private Collectors and Islamic Arts of the Book,” in *Treasures of Islam*, ed. Toby Falk (Secaucus, N.J.: Wellfleet Press, 1985), 25–31; Jennifer Cadere-Gillette, “Collecting and Displaying Islamic Art in 19th- and 20th-Century Europe,” Qualifying Paper, Harvard University, May 1995; and Rémi Labrusse, “Paris, capitale des arts de l’islam?: Quelques aperçus sur la formation des collections françaises d’art islamique au tournant du siècle,” *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire de l’Art Français*, année 1997 (Paris, 1998): 275–308. Although Labrusse examines several of the exhibitions treated here, his focus is on factors that account for an increased interest in Islamic art up until the First World War and a reduced interest in it after that time. Cadere-Gillette’s study will appear in a forthcoming issue of *RES*.

21. Anon., *Catalogue des objets d’art de l’Orient et de l’Occident tableaux, dessins composant la collection de feu M. Albert Goupil*, sale catalogue, Hôtel Drouot, 23–27 April 1888 (Paris: Imprimerie de l’Art, 1888).

22. The categories of Oriental objects in Goupil’s collection are: carpets and textiles, glass, ceramics, bronzes, arms and armor, iron, ivory boxes, miscellaneous objects, marbles, wood, and furniture.

23. Léon Charvet, *Enseignement des arts décoratifs: Histoire générale, procédés industriels caractéristiques des époques et des styles théorie de la composition décorative des oeuvres d’art ancien* (Paris: Flammarion, 1889?). Arab and Persian art is covered in chap. 7. The text was intended for experts, antiquarians, amateurs, and craftsmen (*ouvriers d’art*) among others.

24. The Occidental room, by contrast, is less densely cluttered although it also unites tapestries, carpets (Oriental), furniture, sculpture, and paintings.

25. For other authentic interiors, see the Arab rooms of Leighton House, London (by Georges Aitchison, 1877–79) and Cardiff Castle, Cardiff (by William Burges, 1800–1801), illustrated in John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500–1920* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 192–93.

26. Georges Marye, “L’exposition d’art musulman (deuxième et dernier article),” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 3rd series, 11 (1894): 54–72, 70.

27. Emile Molinier, “La collection Albert Goupil. I. L’art occidental,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 32 (May 1885): 377–94; and Henri Lavoix, “La collection Albert Goupil. II. L’art oriental,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 32 (October 1885): 287–307.

28. Lavoix, “La collection Albert Goupil. II. L’art oriental,” 287. A *mashrabiya* is a projecting window with a latticework frame. When used as a general term, it may refer to turned wood.

29. Cited in Glenn D. Lowry and Susan Nemazee, *A Jeweler’s Eye: Islamic Arts of the Book from the Vever Collection* (Wash-

ington, D.C., Seattle, and London: Smithsonian Institution and University of Washington Press, 1988), 28.

30. Cited in Lowry and Nemazee, *A Jeweler’s Eye*, 23.

31. Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, Archive. Henri Vever Papers, gift accession no. A. 1988. 4, box 1 of 2, folder 3 (H. V. 1 1889–1901).

32. Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, Archive. Henri Vever Papers, gift accession no. A. 1988. 4, box 1 of 2, folder 5 (H. V. 3 Nov. 1898–Nov. 1899).

33. Eugène Grasset (1841–1917), a prominent Art Nouveau artist, worked in a variety of media. For a general survey of his work and his professional relationships with Vever and Gillot, see Anne Murray-Robertson, *Grasset: Pionnier de l’art nouveau* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1981).

34. For studies relevant to the subject of informal and formal social groups and societies in late nineteenth-century France, see Ward, “Impressionist Installations and Private Exhibitions,” 605, n. 22; and the recent book by Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women’s Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

35. In fact, many people believed that the supply of objects in North Africa and the Middle East was depleted, obviating the need for travel.

36. The Parisian public had already been primed in the 1860s and 1870s. L’Union centrale des Beaux-Arts had organized shows that included Oriental art in 1865 and at the Champs de Mars in 1867 (at the Universal Exposition). These exhibitions brought together works dispersed throughout private and public collections. In 1869, l’Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts “moved the question forward in a massive step by defining exhibitions according to kind (*espèce*) and reserving the limits of the vast rooms of the Palais de l’Industrie to the art products of a single country of the world. This time, the union wanted to introduce us to the splendors of the Orient” (A. Jacquemart, “Exposition de l’Union centrale des Beaux-Arts appliqués à l’industrie. Musée Oriental,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 2nd series, 2 [1869]: 332–51, 332).

37. Brigitte Felderer and Eleonora Louis, “The Constancy of the Ephemeral: On the Self-Representation of Art in the Vienna Secession,” in *Secession: The Vienna Secession from Temple of Art to Exhibition Hall*, ed. Eleonora Louis (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje, ca. 1997), 108–57, 134.

38. One contemporary account of the artist’s studio, written by Elizabeth Bisland in 1889, understood it as a reflection of “the quality of the work attempted there, and of the character of the workman” (ead., “The Studios of New York,” *The Cosmopolitan* 7, 1 [May 1889]: 2–22, 2). Bisland noted that “Unkemptness is the tradition of the painter’s atelier; but it is the pleasant confusion of beautiful things which serve him as still life models,

and are at once the natural expression of his fondness for color and form, and the silent influences which constantly deepen it" (p. 2). Objects in an artist's studio were rarely transferred to canvas but served to "foster the owner's passion for color, and to give him the inspiration he draws in from the sense of dignity and sumptuousness of his surroundings" (p. 6). Functional and formal parallels between the artist's studio and the amateur's home do not require elaboration. Vever's atelier was located in the same building as his shop. His contemporary and friend Grasset also housed a part of his collection in his atelier. For a photograph of Grasset in his studio, see Murray-Robertson, *Grasset*, 156. A comparison could also be made between Goupil's Oriental room and a painting by A. E. Duranton. The extreme left bay of Duranton's painting closely resembles the Goupil interior, although Thornton identifies it by the title "At Jean Léon Gérôme's." For illustration, see Lynn Thornton, *The Orientalists: Painter-Travellers 1828-1908* (Paris: ACR Edition Internationale, 1983), 24-25.

39. For general historical frameworks of European department stores and numerous photographs of interiors and window displays, see Alexandra Artley, ed., *The Golden Age of Shop Design: European Shop Interiors 1880-1939* (London: The Architectural Press, 1975); Marrey, *Les grands magasins des origines à 1939*; and Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1995).

40. Anon., *Collection Hakky-Bey: Objets d'art et de haute curiosité arabes et enopéens*, sale catalogue, Hôtel Drouot (Paris: Imprimerie Georges Petit, 1906). The catalogue lacks a preface, and the "installation" image bears no caption.

41. Vever records attending the sale in his diary entry of 7 June 1898. He mentions other collectors—Gillot, Demaison, and Koechlin—who attended the sale. Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, Archive. Henri Vever Papers, gift accession no. A. 1988. 4, box 1 of 2, folder 4 (H. V. 2 May–Nov. 1898).

42. Henri Cordier, "La Collection Charles Schéfer," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 3rd series, 20 (1898): 245–58, 258.

43. In 1903 Migeon looked back to the 1878 exhibition, thinking that it was the first to show Islamic art in Paris. Among the lenders, he identified Goupil, Schéfer, Leroux, and Piot (Gaston Migeon, "L'exposition des arts musulmans au Musée des Arts Décoratifs," *Les Arts: Revue Mensuelle des Musées, Collections, Expositions* 16 [April 1903]: 2–34, 2).

44. Henri Lavoix, "La Galerie orientale du Trocadéro," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 2nd series, 18 (1878): 768–91, 782. The lenders that he mentions include: de Rothschild, Delort de Gléon, Gérôme, Dutuit, Edouard André, Basilewsky, Posno, Chéblowski, and Eugène Piot.

45. Lavoix, "La Galerie orientale," 784.

46. Lavoix, "La Galerie orientale," 791.

47. Lenders included Edmond de Rothschild, Gérôme, Hakky-Bey, Louis Gonse, Siegfried Bing, Albert Aublet, Bacri, Albert Hartmann, Giannuzzi, Doisy, and Edouard Blanc.

48. Marye, "L'exposition d'art musulman (premier article)." Migeon's recollection was that Marye had been in charge of the 1893 exhibition, adding that he was curator at the Museum of Arab Art in Algiers (Migeon, "L'exposition des arts musulmans au Musée des Arts Décoratifs," 2).

49. Marye, "L'Exposition d'Art Musulman (premier article)," 490–91.

50. Another example is the journal produced in Paris by Hakky-Bey. Published in French and Ottoman, the journal *Le Miroir de l'Art Musulman: Revue Mensuelle & Illustrée Consacrée à l'Etude de l'Art Musulman* (first issued in March 1898) sought to promote Islamic art and was accompanied by dealers' advertisements.

51. Periodically Migeon assessed the state of the Louvre's collections of Islamic art. In 1905 he wrote that the collections still did not match England's, and in 1913 he was able to report "now the Oriental collections have been developed for ten years at the Louvre, and the single room devoted to them has become entirely insufficient" (Gaston Migeon, "Notes d'archéologie musulmane à propos des nouvelles acquisitions du Louvre," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 3rd series, 33 [1905]: 441–55, 441; and id., "Notes d'archéologie musulmane: Acquisitions nouvelles du Musée du Louvre," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 4th series, 10 [1913]: 481–98, 498).

52. Vever records his membership in the diary entry for 28 February 1898. The foundation gave money to purchase objects, and on a visit to the Louvre that day he met with "Migeon, Koechlin, Gillot, Groult, Camondo, Breuot, Lutz, Dreyfus, Kaempfen, Manheim, etc. etc." Migeon showed new acquisitions and proposed other objects to Vever and Gillot "that were in his cabinet [Migeon's] as well as Molinier's," and Vever was "stupified at the great prices that he outlined." Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, Archive. Henri Vever Papers, gift accession no. A. 1988. 4, box 1 of 2, folder 3 (H. V. 1 1898–1901).

53. F. R. Martin, *F. R. Martins Sammlungen aus dem Orient in der Allgemeinen Kunst-und Industrie-Ausstellung zu Stockholm, 1897* (Stockholm: Norstedt and Sons, 1897).

54. For a discussion of the installation of commercial galleries, see Ward, "Impressionist Installations and Private Exhibitions," 599–601; and for the history of hanging techniques, see Giles Waterfield, "Picture Hanging and Gallery Decoration," in *Palaces of Art: Art Galleries in Britain, 1790–1990*, ed. Giles Waterfield (London: Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1991), 49–65.

An interesting comparison could be made between Martin's exhibition and that of Persian and Arab art held in London by the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1885. The absence of photographic documentation would make any conclusive statements foolhardy; all that can be gleaned of its installation comes from a

descriptive catalogue (Burlington Fine Arts Club, *Catalogue of Specimens Illustrative of Persian and Arab Art Exhibited in 1885*). Although the London show put a variety of media on display—ceramics, metalwork, arts of the book, carpets, textiles—it was dominated by the Englishmen's rich collections of ceramics, a wealth bemoaned by French contemporaries and writers of later years. Thirteen cabinets and one table-case housed objects, with more arranged on the cabinets' upper surfaces and underneath them. Still more objects were hung on the wall surfaces left open around the cabinets. Well over 600 objects were shown in the quarters of the club. Wallis, author of the exhibition's catalogue, notes how the modern collector "is no longer alone content with the acquisition of rare or precious objects; he seeks to comprehend their artistic intention and to become acquainted with their relations and affinities" (p. v). The collector is not content with archival research and now "the localities where the special arts are cultivated are visited and explored, and even the very earth is excavated and sifted" (p. vi). Wallis's statement that an art history could be deduced from the material at hand is unusual for its time.

The arrangement of objects in Martin's exhibition could also be compared to the "reconstruction" of a Tunisian souk in the Trocadéro park at the 1900 Paris universal exposition. For an illustration of it, see Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*, 22, fig. 5.

55. Waxwork figures clad in authentic costume had been used as early as the summer of 1854 in London at the Oriental and Turkish Museum. Rooms—baths, coffee houses, palace, harem, bazaars, etc.—were fitted with objects to display aspects of daily life and were inhabited by waxwork figures. See Altick, *Shows of London*, 496. In contrast, the nineteenth-century universal expositions favored the importation of authentic "native" subjects for their simulated street scenes or urban quarters. The ethnographic dimension of Martin's collection may derive from his museum experience; in 1884 he became assistant at Stockholm's ethnographical museum, and in 1890 he became an assistant at the archaeological museum.

56. The collection was published in a large volume, F. R. Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India, and Turkey from the 8th to the 18th Century* (London: Holland Press, 1912; rpt. Trowbridge and London: Redwood Press Ltd., 1968).

57. Lowry and Nemazee (*Jeweler's Eye*, 31) already remarked on Martin's strategies of sale. In one documentable instance, Martin invented an object, the so-called Bellini Album, to serve as a cover for the actual source of the materials the album was said to contain. For the full story, see David J. Roxburgh, "Disorderly Conduct?: F. R. Martin and the Bahrām Mirza Album," *Maqarnas* 15 (1999): 32–57.

Martin published extensively. In the same year of the exhibition, he published two other short texts: F. R. Martin, *Moderne Keramik von Centralasien* (Stockholm: G. Chelius in Kommission, 1897); and id., *Thuren ans Turkestan* (Stockholm: Königlischen Buchdruckerei, 1897).

58. Marye reported on the exhibition in the two articles for *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* already cited. After a brief description of

the installation, he continues with a summary of highlights in each category of media and makes frequent references to the collectors who had lent objects to the exhibition. Marye also notes that in number of objects the exhibition could easily have been outstripped by collections in England but concludes that the French collectors' taste could not be outdone. The harmony and variety of the assemblage gathered at the Palais des Champs-Élysées were a testament to the French collectors' taste, one "much different from the English and the Germans."

59. Marye, "L'exposition d'art musulman (deuxième et dernier article)," 72.

60. Marye, "L'exposition d'art musulman (premier article)," 491.

61. As commented upon by Lowry and Nemazee, *Jeweler's Eye*, 19.

62. De Champeaux, *Portefeuille des arts décoratifs*. For Islamic objects see pls. 21, 26, 28, 39, and 91.

63. Gaston Migeon, *Exposition des arts musulmans au Musée des Arts Décoratifs* (Paris: Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, 1903).

64. Gaston Migeon, Max van Berchem, and Cl. Huart, *Exposition des arts musulmans: Catalogue descriptif*, l'Union centrale des arts décoratifs, Pavillon de Marsan (Paris: Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie, 1903), 3–4.

65. The media were: marble and stone; ivory; wood; copper; bronze, iron, steel; weapons; gold, enamel, jewelry; ceramics; glass; carpets; textiles; manuscripts; paintings; leather and lacquer bindings.

66. Raymond Koechlin, "L'Art Musulman: A propos de l'exposition du Pavillon de Marsan," *Revue de l'Art* 1 (1903): 409–20, 410. Another review essay deals exclusively with the illustrated manuscripts and paintings (E. Blochet, "Musulman Manuscripts and Miniatures as Illustrated in the Recent Exhibition at Paris, Part I," *Burlington Magazine* 2 [June–August 1903]: 132–44). Blochet notes, however, that a visitor's cursory examination of the exhibition may produce the impression that "all these miniatures are so many isolated artistic fancies, scarcely connected one with the other" (p. 132) and that the artists who produced the paintings were unaware of their tradition's history.

67. Migeon, "L'exposition des arts musulmans au Musée des arts décoratifs," 2.

68. Migeon, "L'exposition des arts musulmans au Musée des arts décoratifs," 3.

69. Migeon, "L'exposition des arts musulmans au Musée des arts décoratifs," 3.

70. Migeon, "L'Exposition des Arts Musulmans à l'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs," 351–68.

71. Migeon, "L'exposition des arts musulmans à l'Union centrale des arts décoratifs," 354.

72. Koechlin, "L'art musulman: A propos de l'exposition du Pavillon de Marsan," 409–20.

73. Koechlin, "L'art musulman: A propos de l'exposition du Pavillon de Marsan," 410. The concern stayed with Koechlin. Reviewing an exhibition of Oriental textiles and Persian and Indian paintings in 1907, he wrote: "The public has too great a tendency to confuse the nicknacks (Turqueries) of the bazaar with Oriental art, just as it poorly differentiates between Japanese art and Japanese objects (Japonneries) made for export" (id., "L'Exposition de tissus orientaux et de miniatures de la Perse et de l'Inde au Musée des Arts Décoratifs," *Musées et monuments de France: Revue mensuelle d'art ancien et moderne* 2 [1907]: 36–38, 38).

74. Georges Marçais, *L'exposition d'art musulman d'Alger, Avril 1905* (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Thornin et Fils and A. Fontemoing, 1906), 5.

75. Marçais, *L'exposition d'art musulman d'Alger*, 5.

76. Marçais, *L'exposition d'art musulman d'Alger*, 14.

77. Marçais, *L'exposition d'art musulman d'Alger*, 15–19.

78. In Marçais's (*L'exposition d'art musulman d'Alger*, 17) estimation, "the visitor to the room will be struck by the rugged originality of this art, where traces of a primitive and barbaric ornamentation persist in the juxtaposition and remembrance of Byzantine art in the form of unexpected survivals of classical forms."

79. France's relation to its colonies and the development of colonial museums is a topic too large for detailed study here. According to Marçais, the collection of Islamic art objects that one could find in the country was stipulated by the governor general of Algeria, Maréchal Bugeaud. A permanent exhibition of them occurred in 1854, and by 1889 Algiers became the fixed depository for the collection. Housed originally in the National Library, the collections moved to a new building that was inaugurated in 1897. In the same account, he notes that Governor General Jonnart ordered the 1905 exhibition. The National Museum of Algerian Antiquities and Muslim Art became the Stéphane Gsell Museum in honor of what he had done to develop its collections and in its original constitution (Georges Marçais, *Le Musée Stéphane Gsell: Musée des antiquités et d'art musulman d'Alger* [Algiers: L'Imprimerie Officielle, n.d.], 7–8).

80. *Ausstellung München 1910 Amtlicher Katalog. Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst. Musikfeste Muster-Ausstellung von Musik-Instrumenten* (Munich: Rudolf Mosse, 1910).

81. *Ausstellung München 1910 amtlicher Katalog*, 10–12.

82. On 22 October 1898, Vever met with Koechlin, Gillot, and Migeon after their return from a trip to Cairo. Vever remarks:

"But there are no more really fine bibelots; Cairo is nothing but a bazaar." Nevertheless, the party managed to "rout out" (*déniché*) some fourteenth-century brass objects. Vever's choice of the term *bazaar* has a more or less pejorative ring to it. By his time *bazaar* was used to refer to commercial contexts/enterprises. Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, Archive. Henri Vever Papers, gift accession no. A. 1988. 4, box 1 of 2, folder 5 (H. V. 3 Nov. 1898–Nov. 1899).

83. *Ausstellung München 1910 amtlicher Katalog*, 7.

84. *Ausstellung München 1910 amtlicher Katalog*, 8.

85. *Ausstellung München 1910 amtlicher Katalog*, 8.

86. *Ausstellung München 1910 amtlicher Katalog*, 13.

87. Media were arranged in the following order: carpets; arms; arts of the book; ceramics; rare and precious objects; glass and rock crystal; stone, ivory, and wood; textiles; metalwork; European responses to the Orient; documentation, publications, casts, photographs; and a supplement (presumably late additions to the list of objects).

88. The total number of individual items was greater. Some catalogue entries are for multiple objects.

89. The majority were antique dealers specializing in carpets. One, Krüger and Hahn, purveyor to the court, Cottbus, specialized in the reproduction of Smyrna carpets. Only one firm, Persian Art Gallery, was located outside of Germany (offices in London and Paris). *Ausstellung München 1910 amtlicher Katalog*, 273–75.

90. Carpentry was by Jos. Tröger, painting by Fritz Elchlepp and Jos. Urban, and interior decoration by Franz Stumpf.

91. The exhibition grounds were located west of the city near Theresienwiese. The Baedeker's guide of 1914 names the area as the Ausstellung's Park, and exhibition halls 3, 4, and 5 are visible as the core of the building. See Karl Baedeker, *Southern Germany (Wurtemberg and Bavaria): Handbook for Travellers*, 12th ed. (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1914).

92. *Ausstellung München 1910 amtlicher Katalog*, 268.

93. F. Sarre and F. R. Martin with essays by M. van Berchem, M. Dreger, E. Kühnel, C. List, and S. Schröder, *Die Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst in München 1910*, 4 vols. (Munich: F. Bruckmann A.-G., 1910–12).

94. Many of these individuals were members of the exhibition committee (directed by Von Tschudi). According to Sarre (*Die Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst in München 1910*, 1:2), the members were responsible for making the exhibition an "art historical enterprise."

95. The photograph was taken looking toward room 71, with room 2 directly behind the photographer.

96. Sarre, *Die Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammed-anischer Kunst*, 1:2.
97. Sarre, *Die Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammed-anischer Kunst*, 1:3.
98. See August L. Mayer, "Ausstellungen von Miniaturalereien aus dem islamitischen Kulturkreis in München 1910," *Monatshefte für Kunst-Wissenschaft* 3, 8–9 (Aug.–Sept. 1910): 331–39.
99. Roger Fry, "The Munich Exhibition of Mohammedan Art—I," *Burlington Magazine* 17, 89 (August 1910): 283–90; id., "The Munich Exhibition of Mohammedan Art—II," *Burlington Magazine* 17, 90 (September 1910): 327–33.
100. Gaston Migeon, "Exposition des arts musulmans à Munich," *Les Arts: Revue Mensuelle des Musées, Collections, Expositions* 9, 108 (December 1910): 2–32.
101. Migeon, "Exposition des arts musulmans à Munich," 4–7.
102. Raymond Koechlin, "Correspondance d'Allemagne: L'exposition d'art musulman à Munich," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 52 (September 1910): 255–60, 255. Another reviewer, Gustave Mendel, was especially impressed by the Persian art on exhibition in Munich and highlighted its importance within the general category of Islamic art. Commenting on the monopoly that the French had earned (by treaty) to undertake archaeological expeditions in Persia, he urged immediate action so that the awaiting treasures could be gotten, all the more urgent given that English and German protestations might compromise the French privilege. For Mendel it was a matter of "national honor." He imagined a future when the Louvre would be the preeminent collection of Muslim Persian art in the world, "as it already is for that of Darius and Hammurabi" (id., "L'Exposition des Arts Musulmans à Munich," *Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne* 28 [July–December 1910]: 351–66, 366).
103. Mendel, "L'exposition des arts musulmans à Munich," 258.
104. The term has a military sense, of a previously ordered battalion dispersed. I thank Alexis Sornin for instructing me about the intricacies of this phrase.
105. Mendel focuses on the incoherent arrangement of objects (in contradistinction to the orderly arrangement in the accompanying catalogue) and the wall recesses used for such items as the arts of the book ("L'exposition des arts musulmans à Munich," 351).
106. Koechlin, "Correspondance d'Allemagne," 258.
107. Marcel Montadon, "L'art musulman à l'exposition de Munich 1910," *L'Art Décoratif* 13, 149 (February 1911): 61–108.
108. Montadon, "L'art musulman à l'exposition de Munich 1910," 61.
109. Montadon, "L'art musulman à l'exposition de Munich 1910," 61–62. Montadon then reiterates the exhibition's objectives as described by Von Tschudi.
110. For illustrations of exhibition installations at the Vienna Secession, see Louis, ed., *Secession*.
111. Montadon, "L'art musulman à l'exposition de Munich 1910," 64.
112. Montadon, "L'art musulman à l'exposition de Munich 1910," 65. Montadon believed that the exhibition served as a useful lesson for upcoming exhibitions planned for 1911 in Stockholm and 1913 in Granada (p. 107).
113. As noted by Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988), chap. 2, "Consumer Society," 30–31.
114. The phenomenon is also noted by Labrusse through a focused study of Gaston Migeon's multiple roles as collector, scholar, and curator. See Labrusse, "Paris, capitale des arts de l'islam?" 280–81. The study also includes useful appendices in which the lenders to major exhibitions are listed (the information is culled from the publications that accompanied the exhibitions).
115. On the close relations among installation techniques used in department stores, museums, and fairs, from the 1870s onward and in America, see Neil Harris, *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), chap. 3. Harris observes that many of these techniques were learned by Americans during trips to Europe and argues that the department stores' "dark wood cases, the cluttered interiors, the sense of compression all paralleled the display techniques of fairs and museums" (p. 65).
116. Lavoix, "La collection Albert Goupil. II. L'art oriental," 289–92. Lavoix questioned whether these descriptions could be taken at face value, but his essay's dominant impression was that medieval descriptions did find confirmation in the extant objects themselves.
117. Wallis, *The Godman Collection*, 3. Although Wallis makes this remark, he also notes that a fair amount of historical information was provided in the 1891 publication on Godman's luster vases. The study referred to is probably Edward William Lane's *Arabian Tales and Anecdotes: Being a Selection from the Notes to the New Translation of 'The Thousand and One Nights'* (London: C. Knight and Co., 1845).

Persian Tiles on European Walls: Collecting Ilkhanid Tiles in Nineteenth-Century Europe

ABSTRACT

The earliest well-documented registers of Persian tiles at the Victoria and Albert (formerly South Kensington) Museum and other sources indicate that in the second half of the nineteenth century Ilkhanid tiles were removed in two phases from extant buildings and contributed to the formation of European collections. The first phase, sometime between 1862/63 and 1875, involved the removal of tiles from buildings in Natanz, Varamin, and Qum. Two Frenchmen resident in Iran, Jean-Baptiste Nicolas and Jules Richard, sold many of these tiles to Robert Murdoch Smith, who was then collecting Persian artworks for the South Kensington Museum. During the second phase, from 1881 to 1900, more buildings in Qum, Damghan, and Kashan became objects of pillaging, thus supplying tiles to a number of public and private collectors in Europe and the United States.



FIG. 1. Luster-painted frieze tile from the tomb of ^cAbd al-Ṣamad at Natanz, dated Shawwāl (?) A.H. 707/ March–April (?) A.D. 1308. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Emile Rey, 1912 (12.44).

GLAZED CERAMIC architectural decoration flourished in Iran as never before during the Ilkhanid period (1258–1353). Changes in the decorative techniques of tile revetment were closely allied to the development of the art of pottery. Active potters from Kashan further refined the technique of luster painting, in which compounds of metal oxides were applied over a previously fired glaze and then refired, producing a glittery, metallic surface. Other techniques such as polychrome glazing and underglaze painting were for the first time applied to tile decoration in Iran, while a new overglaze painting technique known as *lājvardīna* (characteristically deep blue or turquoise and decorated with gold leaf) was invented perhaps specifically for architectural revetment. Tiles decorated in these various techniques were used extensively to adorn both interior and exterior surfaces of such buildings as palaces, mosques, and shrines. Ilkhanid buildings must have been magnificent with their complete tile decoration. But, unfortunately, remarkably few tile ensembles remain *in situ*.

Thousands of Ilkhanid tiles are currently preserved in public and private collections all over the world. They are one of the major attractions of exhibitions and collections of Islamic art because of the brilliant color of their glazes and their delicate overglaze painting. Even though such tiles once decorated the surfaces of Persian buildings, each has been removed from its original context: we do not know to which building the tile once belonged or with what other kinds of tiles it was combined in the original decorative scheme.

Part of the difficulty in reconstructing a tile's context stems from the lack of sufficient information about where, when, and how a specific tile in a collection was acquired. It is not surprising that such information is missing because, unless they came from official excavations, the vast majority of tiles in public and private collections or on the art market must have been secretly removed from buildings by plunderers. Organized pillaging seems to have begun in Iran in the second half of the nineteenth century, when European travel accounts of Iran may have first drawn attention to the splendor of Persian tile decoration.

This essay will reconstruct the situations in which the Ilkhanid tiles in various early collections

in Europe could have been acquired, making use of the earliest well-documented registers of Persian tiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum and other contemporary sources. It suggests a process by which a certain type of art object gained the attention of collectors and how such objects were obtained and handled before they reached these collectors. While many examples of Persian art appeared on the art market without information on their provenance, several sets of Ilkhanid tiles are rare exceptions whose provenance could be traced to a certain degree. This study thus demonstrates one aspect in the genesis of collecting Persian art from the Islamic period.

TILES FROM NATANZ

In 1867 Count Julien de Rochechouart (d. 1880s), French minister plenipotentiary, published a memoir of his trip to Iran in 1862–63. In this book he admires the beauty of Persian tiles, especially those at “la mosquée de Natinz,” and refers to some other places with tile-decorated buildings as follows:

Les plus belles briques émaillées qui se soient faites en Perse sont celles qui décorent la mosquée de Natinz et une des nombreuses chapelles de Koum; ni les briques qui décorent les mosquées de Seljouk, de Tébriz, de Sultanieh et de Véramine, ni celles des Sэфewiehs qui recouvrent la plupart des monuments d'Ispahan ne sont comparables.¹

He also confesses that he possesses some tiles from Natanz. According to his description, they are decorated with arabesques, flowers, leaves, and birds, and they bear “Persian” inscriptions painted in cobalt blue in relief.² The present location of these tiles is unknown, but they apparently belong to a series of luster-painted frieze tiles with Qurʾānic inscriptions and bird ornamentation in relief that are currently preserved in various collections (fig. 1). It is now widely acknowledged that they came from the tomb of ʿAbd al-Ṣamad in Natanz (fig. 2), whose tile decoration was executed about 1308.³ Most of the tiles at this monument have now been removed, leaving only plaster with impressions of tiles (fig.

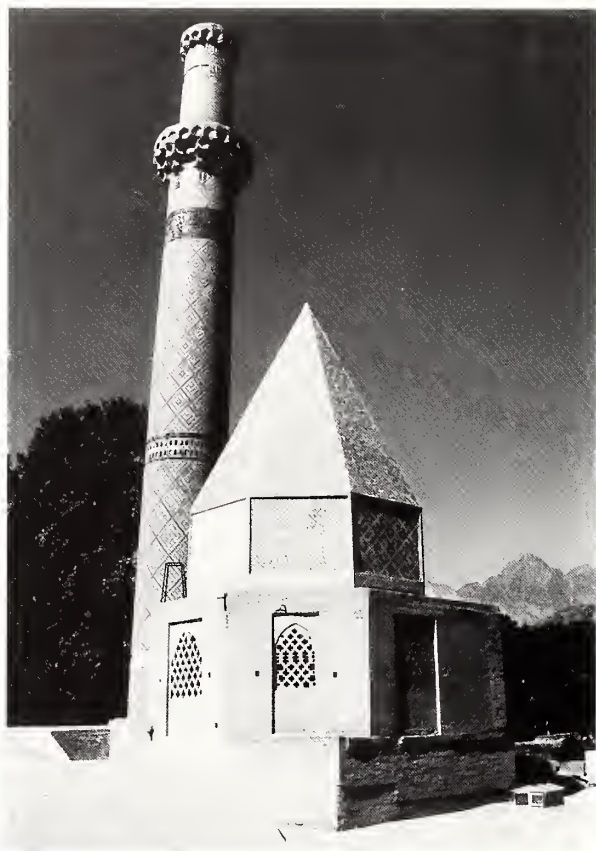


FIG. 2. *Tomb of 'Abd al-Šamad at Natanz.*
Photo: Naoko Fukami.



FIG. 3. *Dado of the tomb of 'Abd al-Šamad at Natanz.*
Photo: Sheila S. Blair.

3).⁴ Rochechouart's memoir, however, demonstrates that in 1862–63 the tile decoration at the tomb of 'Abd al-Šamad was sufficiently intact for him to admire its incomparable beauty, although a certain portion of tiles had already been removed from its walls.

Rochechouart's trip to Iran probably marks the very beginning of the acquisition of Ilkhanid tiles by Europeans. Six years later, several Persian luster-painted tiles were mentioned in a descriptive catalogue of the collection of the South Kensington Museum, the predecessor of the Victoria and Albert Museum, written by Charles Drury Edward Fortnum. Fortnum, who knew little about Persian tiles, repeats the information furnished by Rochechouart, again asserting that the tiles from Natanz are "of the most perfect workmanship and artistic excellence."⁵

The tiles from Natanz must already have been of great interest in England by the time the South

Kensington Museum acquired a large group of Persian objects in 1876. This purchase was made through the intermediation of Sir Robert Murdoch Smith (1835–1900), director of the Persian Telegraph Department in Tehran from 1865 to 1887,⁶ who started collecting Persian art in 1873 at the behest of the directors of the South Kensington Museum. Murdoch Smith's first shipment, approved by the Persian authorities, arrived in London later in the same year and was registered by the museum in the next year. He was active in Iran in collecting Persian works of art for this museum and for the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (present Royal Scottish Museum) until 1884. The catalogue of the first exhibition of Murdoch Smith's collection, held at the South Kensington Museum in 1876, lists 3,517 objects, including 1,164 tiles, among which 958 were old, 52 fragmentary, and 154 modern; tiles formed roughly one-third of the entire acquisition.⁷ The preface to the

catalogue states that Murdoch Smith secured for the museum “a collection which had been formed by a French gentleman long resident in Persia, M. Richard.”⁸ Murdoch Smith’s other collaborators were Jean-Baptiste Nicolas, a secretary to the French legation in Tehran, and Sidney Churchill, Murdoch Smith’s employee at the Tehran office of the telegraph company.⁹

Forty-three tiles in the South Kensington Museum’s 1876 acquisition (1494.1 to 40-1876; 1503 to a-1876; 1840-1876) are recorded as having come from “a mosque at Natanz.”¹⁰ According to the museum register, forty tiles (1494-1876) were purchased probably from Nicolas (“Bought, Mr. Nicholas[sic]?”); another three once belonged to the Richard collection (“Bought. Major R. Murdoch Smith [Richard Coll.]”). Yet a frieze tile with bird ornamentations that accords with the description of the Natanz tiles by Rochechouart (1485-1876) is recorded to be from “the mosque at Koum.” How this tile was acquired by the museum is not mentioned in the register. In addition, the register does not record the provenance of another tile (1831-1876) whose dimensions and decorative style indicate that it certainly belongs to the same series of rectangular frieze tiles as some tiles recorded to be from Natanz.

There were a few later additions of Natanz tiles to the South Kensington Museum per Murdoch Smith: well-known *mihrāb* tiles (71-1885) purchased from Collingnow, a Dutch merchant in Isfahan, in 1884 and registered in the next year¹¹ and three rectangular frieze tiles (470, 729, 730-1888) transferred from Edinburgh in 1888.¹²

In summary, the main provenance for the Natanz tiles at the South Kensington Museum were two Frenchmen, Nicolas and Richard. Both of them lived in Iran for a long period and were fluent Persian speakers. It should also be noted that both could have been very close to the Qajar government (1779–1925), as was Murdoch Smith.

Jean-Baptiste Nicolas (1814–75) arrived in Tehran on 10 December 1854 to prepare for the French diplomatic mission to Iran from Napoleon III (r. 1851–70) scheduled for the following year.¹³ Registered as an “interpreter” in the personnel list of the mission,¹⁴ he published a language book entitled *Dialogues persans-français: A l’usage des*

drogmans, des jeunes de langues, des négociants et des voyageurs in 1857. He apparently remained in Iran after the mission. When he published his translation of ‘Umar Khayyām’s poems under the title *Les quatraines de Khèyam* in 1867, he was referred to as a French consul in Rasht.¹⁵ It was during the last year of his life that he sold Persian works of art to Murdoch Smith. Unfortunately, there is no further information on his life.

Jules Richard (1816–91), or Rizā Khān, had been living in Tehran since 29 October 1844. He served first as a daguerreotype photographer for Nāṣir al-Dīn Mirzā (later Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, r. 1848–96).¹⁶ In 1851 he was employed as an instructor in French language at the Dār al-Funūn, the first European-style educational institution founded in Iran by the Qajar minister Amīr Kabīr in the previous year.¹⁷ In about 1857 he had been forced to convert to Islam as a result of a scandal and took the Muslim name Rizā. He accompanied Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh as an interpreter when the shah visited Europe for the first time in 1873.

His activities as a Persian art collector and art dealer can be deduced from various contemporary sources. According to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, Richard purchased some Persian works of art from brokers and other Iranians, while others were gifts to him.¹⁸ C. J. Wills, who visited Richard’s house in Tehran in 1866, writes:

The Frenchman had a large collection of valuable antiquities, which he showed us, and they were all genuine. That was seventeen years ago; now, in a hundred specimens from Persia, be they what they will, ninety are shams. Amongst other treasures he had a fine balass ruby as big as a florin, on which was cut an intaglio of a Sasanian king, which was, I believe, afterwards purchased by Mr. Alison (then Her Majesty’s Minister) for a large sum. At that time the craze for objects of oriental art had not set in, and the big tiles we saw (or bricks) of *reflet métallique*, with raised inscriptions, were such as one seldom sees nowadays, save in national collections.¹⁹

As already mentioned, Richard sold and donated a large part of his collection to Murdoch Smith in 1875.

FIG. 4. *Imāmzāda Yaḥyā at Varamin.*
 Photo: Naoko Fukami.



He exhibited the rest at the Persian section of the Paris Exposition in 1889.²⁰ After the exposition closed, a part of his collection was sold to F. DuCane Godman (whose extensive collection of Islamic ceramics was bequeathed to the British Museum in 1983);²¹ another part went to Murdoch Smith, who divided the purchase among the South Kensington Museum, Edinburgh, and Dublin.²² In addition, John Richard Preece, consul general at Isfahan, purchased two tiles said to have come from Varamin through Richard at an unknown date.²³

It is uncertain whether a large part of Richard's collection already had been formed when Wills saw it in 1866. He evidently owned some luster-painted frieze tiles at that time, but whether Richard's collection then included tiles from Natanz is impossible to know. The facts known about the acquisition of the Natanz tiles can be summarized as follows: Rochechouart obtained his Natanz tiles in 1862/63, when the building was still largely intact; Murdoch Smith acquired a large group of Natanz tiles from Nicolas and Richard in 1875. Moreover, the Godman collection, to which a "considerable addition was made in 1889 by the purchase of the Richard Collection in the Paris Exhibition of the year,"²⁴ contained at least two tiles that can be identified as having come from Natanz (British Museum accession numbers: OA G.1983.195,

202). These facts suggest that the majority of the tiles from the tomb of 'Abd al-Ṣamad at Natanz were removed some time between 1862/63 and 1875.²⁵

TILES FROM VARAMIN

Wide-scale removal of Ilkhanid tiles also occurred at the other Iranian sites in Rochechouart's list of buildings with tile decoration, namely at Varamin and Qum.

The building at Varamin was a shrine called *Imāmzāda Yaḥyā* (fig. 4).²⁶ Thirty-seven tiles in Murdoch Smith's 1875 acquisition are recorded as having come "from the ruins of Verameen" (1492 to a, 1828 to e, 1829 to c, 1834 to b, 1835 to a, 1836, 1837 to k, 1838 to f-1876). These are luster-painted star and cross tiles whose maximum length measures about 31 cm. The luster painting in the main field shows stylized vegetal decoration, while their border carries Qur'ānic inscriptions. Some of the tiles bear dates ranging from Dhū al-Ḥijja 660 to Ṣafar 661 (October to December 1262) (fig. 5). Among these tiles acquired by the South Kensington Museum, two registered as 1492-1876 were probably purchased from Nicolas; another thirty-five came from Richard.

Tiles of the same type are also included in the Godman collection (British Museum accession



FIG. 5. *Luster-painted eight-pointed star tile with vegetal decoration from the Imāmzāda Yahyā at Varamin, dated A.H. 661/A.D. 1262–63. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.100).*

numbers: OA G.1983.451–54, 478, 480). Two tiles in the Preece collection purchased from Richard are recorded as having come from Varamin.²⁷ The fact that the tiles from Varamin came through Richard and Nicolas together with the Natanz tiles indicates that they were removed from the building at around the same time and presumably by the same individuals who had worked at Natanz or else by others closely allied with them.

Jane Dieulafoy, who visited the Imāmzāda Yahyā on 18 June 1881, wrote that its dadoes, sarcophagus, and *mihrāb* were clad in luster-painted tiles but “quelques parties de ce revêtement ont été dérobées et vendues à Téhéran à des prix très élevés.”²⁸ The *mihrāb* was still intact then because she presents a drawing of it in her publication. At present all areas that once were decorated with tiles are bare.

According to Friedrich Sarre, the *mihrāb* tiles dated to Sha‘bān 663/May 1265 that Dieulafoy saw *in situ* were taken from the building at the end of the nineteenth century and exhibited at the World Exposition in Paris in 1900.²⁹ Another source says that the tiles were “taken to Paris by the wealthy owner of the village and sold there.”³⁰ Most tiles passed into

the Kevorkian collection and are now in a private collection in the United States. One such tile was previously owned by Octave Homberg, but its present location is unknown;³¹ another preserved in the Hermitage was acquired for the Stieglitz Museum in 1901 from Mme. Duffenty in Paris.³² A *mihrāb*-like panel consisting of two large tiles in the Hermitage came from the sarcophagus at this *imāmzāda*.³³ It is uncertain when these tiles were taken from the building—most likely at the same time as the *mihrāb* tiles.

Apparently, there were two phases in the plundering of the building: one before 1875, which supplied tiles to Richard and Nicolas, and another after 1881 and before 1900, which stripped all the remaining tiles. Sarre believed that the second vandalism was the reason he was prohibited from entering the building when he visited there in the fall of 1897.³⁴

TILES FROM QUM

Three tiles acquired by the South Kensington Museum in 1876 are recorded as having come from “the mosque at Koum” (1485, 1526, 1527–1876). As indicated

above, tile 1485-1876 certainly belonged to the tomb of ʿAbd al-Šamad in Natanz. The other two are fairly large panel tiles: 1526-1876, measuring 60 × 62 cm, has “raised Naskh letters and flowers on lustred ground diapered with white leaflets”; 1527-1876, measuring 63.5 × 46 cm, has “raised Kufic inscriptions, flowers, and a doorway in which a lamp is suspended, on lustred and diapered ground.”³⁵ Both tiles came from Richard. There is no evidence regarding which building or buildings in Qum these tiles once decorated.

As a holy city of Shiʿism, Qum is the home of a number of shrines of Shiʿite religious figures, including Fāṭima, sister of the eighth imam Riżā. Many of these shrines were decorated with Ilkhanid tiles, mainly luster-painted. The interior tiles in the Shrine of Fāṭima remain *in situ*.³⁶ They escaped plundering probably because the building was regarded as so sacred that it was inaccessible to plunderers. Among the numerous shrines in Qum, those that have suffered from theft and thus could be a source for the exported tiles are: the Imāmzāda Jaʿfar, the Imāmzāda ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar, the Imāmzāda Aḥmad ibn Qāsim, and the Imāmzāda Ismāʿil.

At the Imāmzāda Jaʿfar, the area of the *miḥrāb* and all the interior surfaces up to about two meters above ground level are presently coated with white plaster,³⁷ and they may once have been decorated with tiles. A certain number of Ilkhanid tiles on the sarcophagus remain *in situ*.³⁸

The Imāmzāda ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar, also known as the Dar Bihišt, is dated to Rabīʿ II 700/January 1301 and was rebuilt in 740/1339–40.³⁹ Although the Imāmzāda Aḥmad ibn Qāsim is dated to Muḥarram 780/March–April 1378, the building seems to have been decorated with Ilkhanid luster-painted tiles. Muḥammad Taqī Bik Albāb wrote about these two monuments in 1915–16:

The tomb chambers of these buildings have tilework. The tiles make up inscriptions, and some chapters from the Qurʾān are written. Both buildings have the same type of square luster-painted tiles. Westerners from England saw these tiles and gave three *tūmāns* to the caretakers of these two shrines to obtain some pieces from them. The caretakers, however, were not satisfied with the

amount [and declined to give the tiles]. Finally, the Westerners employed some scoundrels, who stole four pieces from the Imāmzāda Aḥmad ibn Qāsim and gave them to the Westerners.⁴⁰

A tile panel dated to Šafar 663/November 1264 and signed by ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Ṭāhir is most likely to have come from the Imāmzāda Aḥmad ibn Qāsim. It was previously preserved in Berlin and destroyed during the war. According to testimony in 1880–81, there were tiles with the same date and signature in this building.⁴¹ It had been in the Preece Collection in the United Kingdom before it was donated to the Berlin Museum in 1928 by Dr. Jakob Goldschmidt through the intermediation of an art dealer in London.⁴² Since the panel appears in the catalogue of the former Preece Collection published in 1913,⁴³ the tiles must have been removed sometime between 1880–81 and 1913.

In 1937, Yedda Godard wrote about the Imāmzāda ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar that this structure’s dadoes, consisting of star and cross tiles, were plundered in the last century, and most of the tiles are now widely dispersed.⁴⁴ It has not been possible to trace their whereabouts. The *miḥrāb* tiles dated to Ramaḍān 734/May 1334 from this building were moved to the Iran Bastan Museum (present National Museum of Iran) in Tehran sometime in the 1930s. At the time of the transfer, five tiles were already missing.⁴⁵ Two of these “missing” tiles, now preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,⁴⁶ were given to the museum in 1940 by Horace Havemeyer, but how they reached him is unknown.⁴⁷

The Imāmzāda Ismāʿil is located in a suburban area of Qum. Ten reused tiles of various shapes, techniques, and periods said to have once decorated a low wall in front of the building (*izāra*) were removed to the Museum of the Holy Sanctuary of Qum.⁴⁸ Since it is unlikely that the wall was decorated only with the ten tiles in the museum, many more tiles may have been removed from the building sometime before the transfer to the museum.

TAKHT-I SULAIMAN—TYPE TILES

In addition to the tiles said to have come from Natanz, Varamin, and Qum, there is a curious tile included



FIG. 6. *Luster-painted frieze tile with Bahrām Gūr and Āzāda, datable A.D. 1270–75. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1841–1876. Copyright V&A Picture Library.*

among the 1876 acquisitions of the South Kensington Museum. It is a luster-painted frieze tile measuring 31.5×32 cm with a narrative depiction of Bahrām Gūr and Āzāda hunting on camelback (1841–1876; fig. 6). It is recorded as having come from “an old castle in Mazandaran”⁴⁹ and was purchased from Richard. Murdoch Smith believed the tile dated “from before the Mohamedan era” due to its figurative nature; he dated it to the seventh century A.D. in the catalogue.⁵⁰ Curiously, the tile is made from the same mold as a type of tile excavated from Takht-i Sulaiman, an Ilkhanid palace in Azerbaijan datable to the 1270s.⁵¹ At least three other nonexcavated tiles are made from the same mold.⁵² Could they come from Takht-i Sulaiman?

During the excavations conducted at Takht-i Sulaiman by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut from 1959 to 1978, about one hundred types of tiles made from different molds were found. They are decorated in such techniques as luster painting, *lājvardīna*, monochrome glazing, and polychrome glazing, and their ornament includes figurative, vegetal, inscriptional, and geometric designs. Tiles with figures of Chinese dragons and phoenixes are espe-

cially remarkable because these motifs were newly introduced to Iran as a result of the close relationship of the Ilkhanids to the Yuan dynasty in China. On the other hand, tiles made from the same molds as those excavated at Takht-i Sulaiman are preserved in various collections all over the world. More than 160 such tiles are known, representing about thirty of the tile types found at the site. For the most part they are in much better condition than the excavated examples, and some are even complete. The provenance of these tiles and when they were removed from buildings are rarely reported. Since most of them are in good condition, they must have come from buildings that had survived intact into the nineteenth century because tiles excavated from ruins are very often broken or fragmentary.

With the exception of a few tiles that remained *in situ*, the majority of the tiles found at this site, all fragmentary, had been deliberately removed from the walls and stored together within the ruins at a few specific spots, which were buried deep below the modern surface level (fig. 7).⁵³ According to Dietrich Huff, the second chief excavator, the removal of these tiles did not appear to have been recent, and there

FIG. 7. *Takht-i Sulaiman*. Photo: Husain Razzāqī.



FIG. 8. *Luster-painted frieze tile* made from fragments of *Takht-i Sulaiman*-type tiles and fragments of *Natanz* tiles. Takuo Kato Collection, Gifu, Japan.



were no traces of recent plundering. Therefore, it is less likely that these tiles were removed from Takht-i Sulaiman in the nineteenth century.

Some types of tiles were probably produced at

Takht-i Sulaiman because molds used for manufacturing them were excavated at the pottery workshop there. Hence, it is most likely that they had originally decorated the palace at Takht-i Sulaiman. But if these

nonexcavated tiles were not obtained from Takht-i Sulaiman as the excavator suggests, a possible hypothesis is that they were removed from the walls of Takht-i Sulaiman long before the nineteenth century, reused in other buildings, then subsequently removed from the buildings where they had been reinstalled.

In this case, could Mazandaran, as mentioned in Murdoch Smith's catalogue and the Victoria and Albert Museum register, be their provenance? Mazandaran is referred to as the provenance of a tile only once in the museum register, which follows Murdoch Smith's information about his acquisition, and this alleged provenance has not been identified. Neither travel memoirs nor scientific reports indicate that any buildings in Mazandaran had luster-painted tile decoration.

These Takht-i Sulaiman-type tiles were, however, probably removed by the same group as the Natanz tiles. One piece of evidence for this suggestion is that the tile with Bahrām Gūr and Āzāda in the Victoria and Albert Museum was purchased from Richard; the Natanz tiles and Takht-i Sulaiman-type tiles are often preserved in the same other early collections of Persian tiles, such as the Godman collection, the Henri-René d'Allemagne collection, and the collection of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.

Another stronger piece of evidence is that a few composite tiles consisting of fragments of Takht-i Sulaiman-type tiles and fragments of distinctive inscriptional frieze tiles with bird figures in their upper border from Natanz have passed through the art market. One such tile is in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, and two are in private collections in Japan (fig. 8). These three composite tiles suggest that fragments of Takht-i Sulaiman-type tiles and those of Natanz tiles were in the hands of a single individual at the same time before the sales. Since fragmentary tiles were not favored for sale, they were joined together to reconstruct seemingly complete tiles. The person who kept the fragments must have had a strong connection with the removal of both Takht-i Sulaiman-type tiles and Natanz tiles.

Rather than Mazandaran, it seems likely that Qum, where Rochechouart reported seeing beautiful tile decoration and from which Richard claimed that a few tiles were taken, was the true provenance

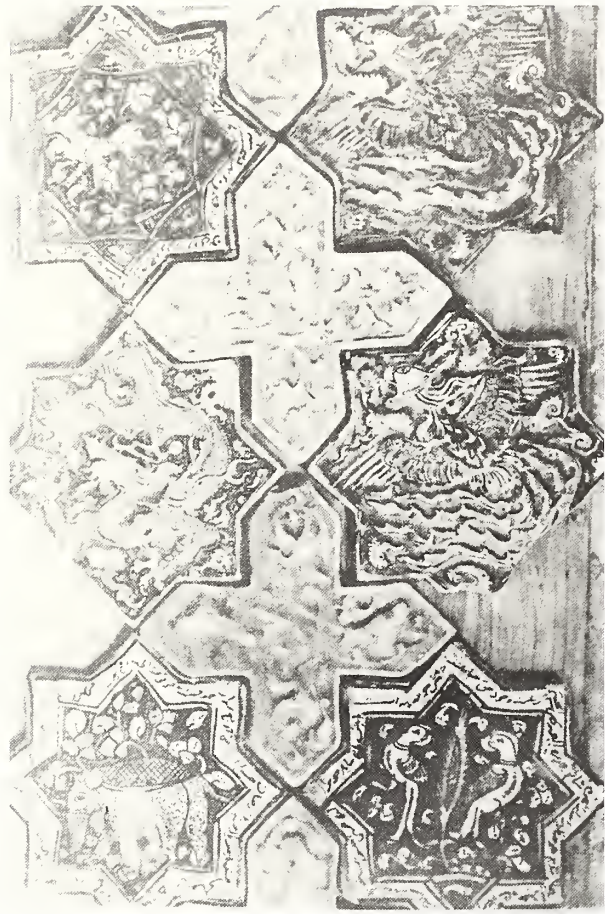


FIG. 9. Tiles from the Imāmzāda 'Alī ibn Ja'far at Qum. Museum of the Holy Sanctuary of Qum. After Godard, "Pièces datées de céramique," fig. 145.

of the reused Takht-i Sulaiman tiles. Indeed, several types of Takht-i Sulaiman tiles were reused at two mausolea in the Qum area. Since they are mixed with tiles of various shapes, dimensions, techniques, and periods, it is obvious that they were not made specifically for these buildings.

The walls of the Imāmzāda 'Alī ibn Ja'far in Qum contained at least three Takht-i Sulaiman-type tiles. The surviving tiles, including three Takht-i Sulaiman-type luster-painted tiles with a Chinese dragon or phoenix in relief, have been taken to the Museum of the Holy Sanctuary of Qum (fig. 9).⁵⁴ Another mausoleum with Takht-i Sulaiman-type tiles is the Imāmzāda Ismā'il.⁵⁵ They include two Takht-i Sulaiman-type tiles, one luster-painted star tile with a Chinese dragon in relief, and one hexagonal turquoise-glazed tile, also with a Chinese dragon in relief.

It is unknown when the tiles were reinstalled at these two mausolea, but it was probably when the buildings were built or rebuilt. The Imāmzāda ‘Alī ibn Ja‘far is dated to 1301 and was rebuilt in 1339–40. According to Donald N. Wilber, the Imāmzāda Ismā‘il dates to 776/1374, but this date is not confirmed by Ḥusain Mudarrisī Ṭabāṭabāyī, who exclusively researched the inscriptions at the monuments in Qum.⁵⁶ In any event, the removal of tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman at these fairly early dates makes sense in light of the excavated condition of Takht-i Sulaiman. Tiles at Takht-i Sulaiman were removed from the walls in premodern times; those in good condition were reused at the two tombs of religious figures in the Qum area, and those in bad condition were discarded at the site of the Ilkhanid palace. Although it is unknown why tiles of a secular nature were chosen to decorate the mausolea of religious figures, the transfer of tiles from a palace to religious buildings probably increased the chance of their survival because religious buildings have been less often destroyed in the course of history. The tiles of Takht-i Sulaiman types were removed from the shrines’ walls for the second time in the second half of the nineteenth century by Richard’s and/or Nicolas’s agents and were sold to art collectors together with tiles removed from Natanz and Varamin.

CONCLUSION

The earliest acquisition of Ilkhanid tiles in European collections involved the plundering of religious buildings at Natanz, Varamin, and Qum sometime between 1862/63 and 1875. The agents active during that period were probably closely associated with one another in gathering objects and selling them to Europeans. There is no evidence to clarify whether Europeans specially hired such agents or such agents acted independently and found good customers like Richard and Nicolas. Nevertheless, it may be possible that tiles were easily removed from religious buildings because Richard and Nicolas had a strong relationship with the Qajar government. Or perhaps Richard had greater influence because he was a Muslim with legitimate access to religious buildings and

was a photographer and interpreter to the Qajar monarch Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, while Nicolas was a member of the French diplomatic mission to Iran.

Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh himself went to see the Persian section of the Paris Exposition in 1889. The Persian objects exhibited there consisted of the Richard collection. In his travelogue, the shah clearly stated that “tiles from *imāmzādas*” were included in Richard’s collection,⁵⁷ a fact with twofold significance. To begin with, the shah did not feel that religious buildings had been violated by the removal of tiles but instead admired the richness of the collection. Secondly, after the exposition, the Richard collection went on sale and was eventually acquired by Murdoch Smith and Godman. The sale of the Persian objects was probably planned before their shipment to Paris. If so, the shah must have granted Richard permission to do so. The presence of the shah at the Paris Exposition indicates his authorization of Richard’s plan. A similarly implied authorization of sale by the Qajar government can be inferred with the *mihrāb* from the Imāmzāda Yaḥyā at Varamin, which was sold in Europe after being exhibited at the Paris Exposition in 1900.

On the other hand, unlike the shah, religious authorities were offended by the loss of tiles from sacred buildings. Apparently aware of this sentiment, Murdoch Smith was very careful when he shipped tiles removed from religious buildings to Great Britain in 1875. He recommended that the museum directors buy the available tiles taken from mosques immediately because “the attention of the Mollahs has already been drawn to their disappearance, and it is not improbable that the government may soon be induced to take stringent measures for the protection of old religious buildings.”⁵⁸

In 1876, under the pressure of the *‘ulamā*, the Qajar government was forced to issue an edict to ensure that religious buildings were not plundered.⁵⁹ From that date, the provenance of tiles in European collections became ambiguous or anonymous. After 1877 most of the registers of the South Kensington Museum, which were so informative in 1876 when Murdoch Smith’s first acquisition was registered, list such enigmatic provenances as “from a Persian mosque” and “found in the ruins of Rhages (Rhé),

destroyed in the twelfth century.” The latter is improbable as Rhages (Rayy) was destroyed in 1220 before the Mongol invasion, and a date prior to 1220 is too early for such Persian luster-painted tiles.⁶⁰ The provenance of tiles was probably deliberately falsified either to conceal their true source or to associate objects with a famous site such as Rhages known from the Apocrypha (Tobit 4:1 and 9:2).

One of Murdoch Smith’s last purchases of Persian objects was the *miḥrāb* from Natanz, although when Collingnow had offered it to him in 1884, he had refused at first to buy it, considering the purchase a “dangerous undertaking” because the *miḥrāb* was regarded as sacred by the *‘ulamā*.⁶¹ But the directors of the South Kensington Museum urged him to buy it, so he did. Thereafter, Murdoch Smith concentrated on his telegraph job until he returned to England in 1887.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on the importance of Persian wall tiles “à reflet métallique” in Rochechouart’s book in 1867, then Fortnum’s in 1873, and finally Murdoch Smith’s exhibition catalogue in 1876 created an appetite for Persian luster-painted tiles in Europe and the United States, encouraging more and more plundering of Persian tiles from surviving monuments. This second wave of removal of Ilkhanid tiles seems to have taken place sometime between 1881 and 1900. Buildings that had already been despoiled again became the object of plunderers. Ilkhanid tiles were also taken from other buildings, such as the Imāmzāda Ja‘far in Damghan and the Maidān Mosque in Kashan. The tiles from Damghan were identified by Sarre in 1910, based on the description of tiles there in a Persian account of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh’s trip to Mashhad.⁶² A drawing of the *miḥrāb* tiles *in situ* at Kashan was published by Dieulafoy, who saw it in 1881.⁶³ The tiles were acquired by Preece before they entered the Berlin Museum in 1928, together with the *miḥrāb* tiles from the Imāmzāda Aḥmad ibn Qāsim in Qum.⁶⁴ As a result, a tremendous number of tiles have been circulated on the art market and have been dispersed among various collections without information on their provenance. The buildings discussed here are exceptions that have been identified as the provenance of certain groups

of Ilkhanid tiles. The provenance of the great majority of tiles remains unknown.

So many tiles were taken from buildings that only a few monuments in Iran preserve their tile decoration *in situ*. Tiles found their way to other walls very remote from their home. As seen in a photograph of the walls of Octave Homberg’s living room in 1904,⁶⁵ tiles that originally decorated Ilkhanid monuments were to embellish not only museum walls but also the homes of European collectors. □

Notes

The author especially thanks Linda Komaroff for reading the manuscript and providing valuable advice.

1. J. de Rochechouart, *Souvenirs d’un voyage en Perse* (Paris: Challamel aîné, 1867), 314–15.

2. Rochechouart, *Souvenirs*, 315–16.

3. O. Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 136–40, 187; S. S. Blair, *The Ilkhanid Shrine Complex at Natanz, Iran* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 1986), 64.

4. Blair, *Ilkhanid Shrine*, pls. 39, 46, and 47.

5. C. D. E. Fortnum, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Maiolica Hispano-Moresco, Persian, Damascene, and Rhodian Wares, in the South Kensington Museum* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1873), 1.

6. He arrived in Iran in 1862 and joined the Persian Telegraph Department the next year. For detailed information on Murdoch Smith’s activities in Iran, see W. K. Dickson, *The Life of Major-General Sir Robert Murdoch Smith K.C.M.G., Royal Engineer* (Edinburgh and London: W. Blackwell and Sons, 1901); J. M. Scarce, “Travels with Telegraph and Tiles in Persia: From the Private Papers of Major-General Sir Robert Murdoch Smith,” *AARP* 3 (1973): 70–81; and L. M. Helfgott, *Ties That Bind: A Social History of the Iranian Carpet* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution, 1994), 125–43.

7. R. Murdoch Smith, *South Kensington Museum Art Handbooks: Persian Art*, 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged (London: Chapman & Hall, 1876), 101–3.

8. Murdoch Smith, *Persian Art*, preface.
9. Dickson, *Murdoch Smith*, 283; Scarce, "Travels with Telegraph," 75–76; Helfgott, *Ties That Bind*, 139.
10. Museum records of 1876.
11. Helfgott, *Ties That Bind*, 140.
12. The transfer was carried out by Murdoch Smith, who became director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art in 1885.
13. J. Boissel, *Gobineau: L'Orient et l'Iran*, 2 vols. (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973), 1:222, n. 180.
14. Boissel, *Gobineau*, 1:260, n. 420.
15. J.-B. Nicolas, trans., *Les quatrains de Khayyam* (Paris: Impr. impériale, 1867), title page.
16. Ch. Adle, "Notes et documents sur la photographie iranienne et son histoire: I. Les premiers daguerreotypistes c. 1844–1854/1260–1270," *Studia iranica* 12, 2 (1983): 249–80.
17. M. D. Ekhtiar, "The Dār al-Funūn: Educational Reform and Cultural Development in Qajar Iran" (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1994), 159–60.
18. Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, *Rūznāma-yi khāṭirāt-i Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh dar safar-i Sivvum-i Frangistān*, eds. M. 'I. Rīzvānī and F. Qāzilhā, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1371 A.S.), 203.
19. C. J. Wills, *In the Land of the Lion and Sun or Modern Persia, Being Experiences of Life in Persia during a Residence of Fifteen Years in Various Parts of That Country from 1866 to 1881* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 37.
20. J.-B. Feuvrier, *Trois ans à la cour de Perse* (Paris: F. Juven, 1906), 181, n. 1; Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, *Rūznāma-yi khāṭirāt-i*, 203.
21. F. D. Godman, *The Godman Collection of Oriental and Spanish Pottery and Glass, 1865–1900* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1901), v.
22. A note inserted in the entry for 556–1889 of the register of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The name of the collection in Dublin is unknown.
23. *Exhibition of Persian Art & Curios: The Collection Formed by J. R. Preece, Esq., C.M.G., Late H.B.M.'s Consul General at Isphāhān, Persia, at the Vincent Robinson Galleries* (London, 1913), nos. 35 and 36.
24. Godman, *Godman Collection*, v.
25. Jane Dieulafoy, who visited Natanz on 14 August 1881, writes: "La route d'hiver longe le désert et passe à Nateins, où s'élèvent les ruines d'une mosquée revêtue autrefois d'admirables faïences à reflets métalliques." See J. Dieulafoy, *La Perse, la Chaldée et la Susiane* (Paris: Hachette, 1887), 211–12.
26. D. N. Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran: The Il Khānīd Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 109–11; Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, 132, 186, 191.
27. *Exhibition of Persian Art & Curios*, nos. 35 and 36.
28. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 148.
29. F. Sarre, "Eine keramische Werkstatt von Kaschan im 13.–14. Jahrhundert," *Istanbul Mitteilungen* 3 (1935): 64–65, pl. III.
30. Wilber, *Architecture of Islamic Iran*, 110.
31. R. Ettinghausen, "Dated Faience," in *Survey of Persian Art*, ed. A. U. Pope and P. Ackerman (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 1679; Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, 191.
32. V. A. Kratchkowskaya, "Fragments du mihrāb de Varāmīn," *Ars Islamica* 2 (1935): 133.
33. Sarre, "Eine keramische Werkstatt," 66–67, pl. IV.
34. Sarre, "Eine keramische Werkstatt," 66.
35. Murdoch Smith, *Persian Art*, 101.
36. H. Mudarrisī Ṭabāṭabāyī, *Turbat-i pākān*, 2 vols. (Qum, 1396 A.S.), 1:46–50, figs. 2–12.
37. Wilber, *Architecture of Islamic Iran*, 114.
38. Mudarrisī Ṭabāṭabāyī, *Turbat-i pākān*, 2:38–40, figs. 11–13. Oliver Watson believes that several star tiles dated to 665/1266 came from this sarcophagus. See Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, 134, 184, and 191.
39. Wilber, *Architecture of Islamic Iran*, 132.
40. Mudarrisī Ṭabāṭabāyī, *Turbat-i pākān*, 2:68–69. The text quoted has some puzzling passages. I thank Mr. Kazuo Morimoto of the Institute of Oriental Culture for his kind help in reading the text.
41. Mudarrisī Ṭabāṭabāyī, *Turbat-i pākān*, 2:69–70.
42. Sarre, "Eine keramische Werkstatt," 64, pl. II.
43. *Exhibition of Persian Art & Curios*, no. 2.
44. Y. A. Godard, "Pièces datées de céramique de Kāshān à décor lustré," *Āthār-ē Īrān* 2 (1937): 309–37, 324.

45. Godard, "Pièces datées de céramique de Kāshān," fig. 139.
46. S. Carboni and T. Masuya, *Persian Tiles* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993), 28.
47. On the Havemeyer family as collectors of Islamic art, see the article by Jenkins-Madina in this volume.
48. Mudarrisi Ṭabāṭabāyī, *Turbat-i pākān*, 2:191, figs. 236, 248.
49. Murdoch Smith, *Persian Art*, 102.
50. Murdoch Smith, *Persian Art*, 102.
51. E. and R. Naumann, *Takht-i Suleiman: Ausgrabung des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts in Iran* (Munich: Prähistorische Staatssammlung, 1976), cat. no. 127, pp. 43, 51; T. Masuya, "The Ilkhanid Phase of Takht-i Sulaimān" (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1997), 521–26.
52. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz, I. 2894; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 10.56.2; a tile sold at Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York on 24 January 1969.
53. E. and R. Naumann, *Takht-i Suleiman*, 44; E. and R. Naumann, "Ein Kösk im Sommerpalast des Abaqa Chan auf dem Tacht-i Sulaiman und seine Dekoration," in *Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens. In Memoriam Kurt Erdmann*, ed. R. Naumann and O. Aslanapa (Istanbul: Baha Mathbassi, 1969), 41.
54. Godard, "Pièces datées de céramique de Kāshān," fig. 145.
55. Mudarrisi Ṭabāṭabāyī, *Turbat-i pākān*, 2:191, figs. 236, 248.
56. Wilber, *Architecture of Islamic Iran*, 187.
57. Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, *Rūznāma-yi khāṭirāt-i*, 203.
58. Murdoch Smith's letter to the South Kensington Museum, 10 June 1875, quoted from Helfgott, *Ties That Bind*, 129–30.
59. Helfgott, *Ties That Bind*, 130.
60. There is no known monument in Rayy that once was decorated with such tiles. Thirteenth-century Persian luster-painted wares were often attributed to this site, but it is now widely acknowledged that luster-painted pottery was never produced there. See Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, 40–41. Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, however, says that Richard had collected broken tiles from the city of Rayy. See Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, *Rūznāma-yi khāṭirāt-i*, 203.
61. Helfgott, *Ties That Bind*, 140.
62. M. Bahrāmī, "Le problème des ateliers d'étoiles de faïence lustrée," *Revue des arts asiatiques* 10 (1936): 186–87. The tiles are dispersed among the Louvre, the Berlin Museum (present Museum für Islamische Kunst), the Manzi collection (now in the Art Museum of Seattle), the Godman collection (now in the British Museum), and other collections.
63. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 206.
64. *Exhibition of Persian Art & Curios*, no. 1; Sarre, "Eine keramische Werkstatt," 62, pl. I.
65. G. Migeon, "Collection de M. Octave Homberg," *Les Arts* 36 (December 1904): 32.

Appendix

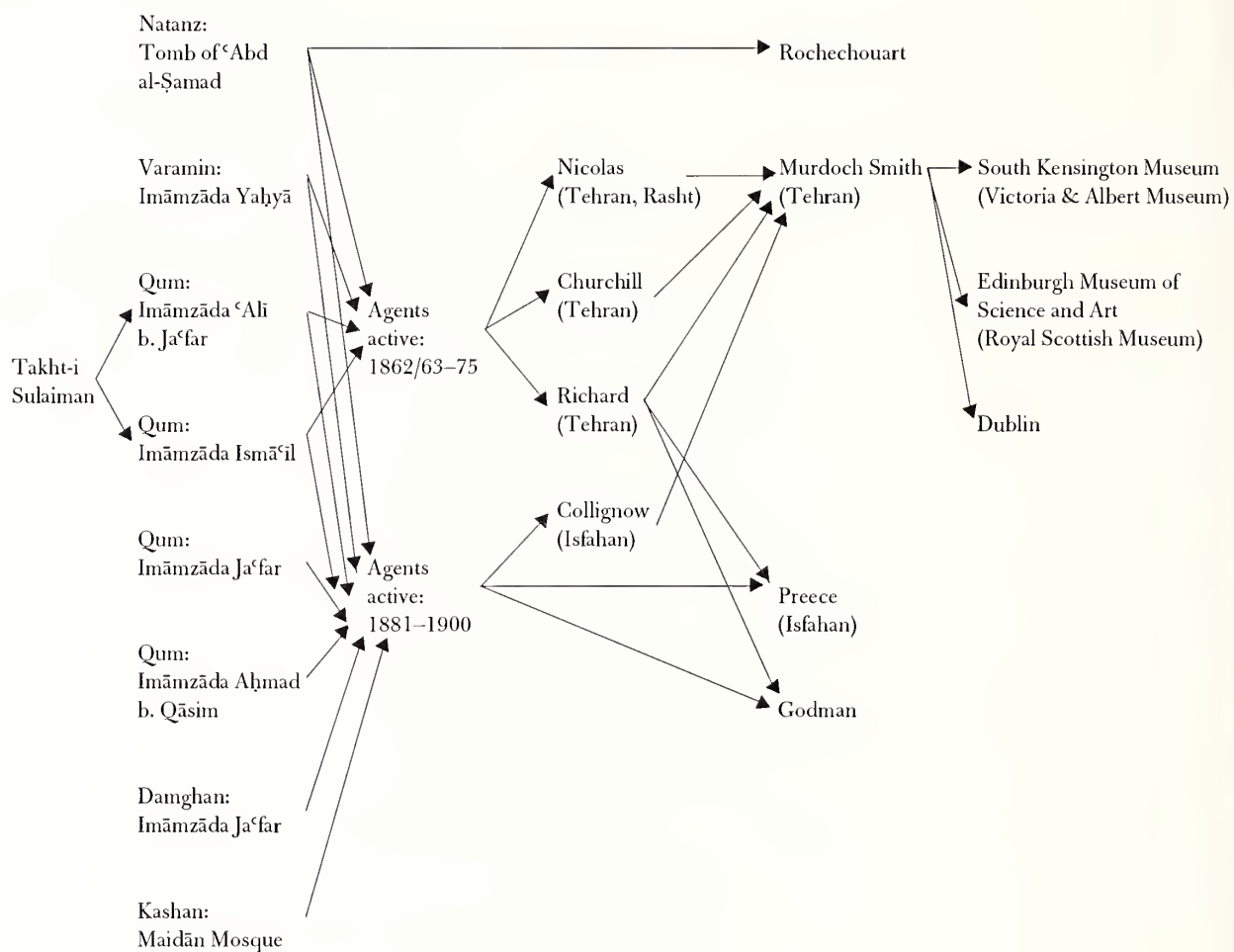
ACQUISITION OF ILKHANID TILES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Origins of Ilkhanid Tiles

Agents

Intermediate Persons

Collectors



Islamic Arts in the Ottoman Imperial Museum, 1889–1923

ABSTRACT

Among the panoply of museums developed by the government of the late Ottoman Empire, those devoted to the Islamic arts reflected the construction of nationalist visions that both responded to the slow dissolution of the empire and foreshadowed Turkish nationalist responses to the religious past. While on the one hand exhibits designated as Islamic rather than Ottoman reframed the religion as belonging to the empire rather than to the Arabs, on the other hand, the same exhibits decontextualized objects from their devotional contexts and thus opened the way for a secularized vision of religious identity.



FIG. 1. *Interior of the Islamic Arts section of the Imperial Museum, ca. 1889–1908. Abdülhamid Albums, courtesy of Professor Nürhan Atasoy.*

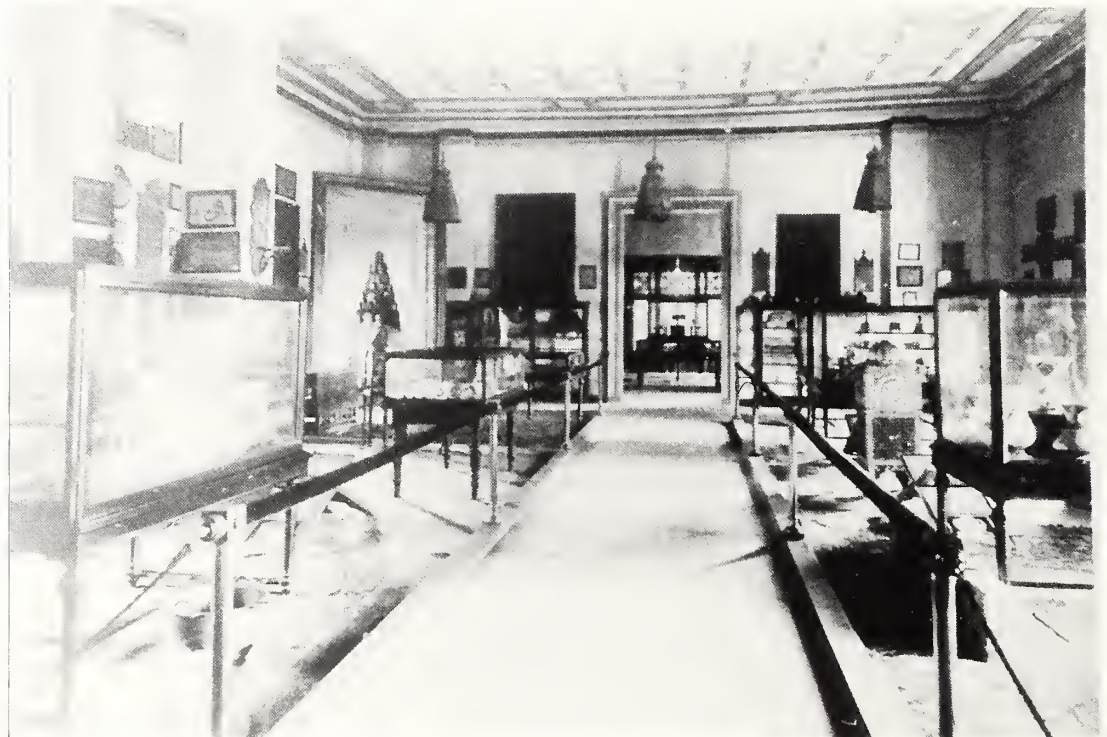


FIG. 2. *Interior of the Islamic Arts section of the Imperial Museum, ca. 1889–1908. Abdülhamid Albums, courtesy of Professor Nürhan Atasoy.*

ALTHOUGH ALL TOO OFTEN relegated to the Gibbonsian trash heap of declining empires, the Ottoman Empire of the late nineteenth century had not put itself out to pasture. Over the course of a century in which it saw its own political, territorial, and economic power dwindle, it fought not only to retain its autonomy but also to forge an identity for a modern state that would emerge from the remnants of an outmoded imperial system. From 1839 on, the successive legal reforms known collectively as the era of the *Tanzimat* instituted new patterns of government, which included egalitarian citizenship for the many ethnicities in the empire, natural rights for those citizens, a parliamentary system that would supplement the monarchy, and an extensive bureaucratic system that would divide the functions of the government into accountable agencies and ministries. Instead of dying, the Ottoman Empire was in the process of being reborn.

During the same years, the empire found itself caught between European colonialism and the rise of nationalism, both concertedly nibbling away at its vast territories. Between the legislative reform within and the conquestatorial maelstrom without, the empire needed to construct a new identity for itself: one that would support shared interests with the growing powers of Europe, assure a national coherence to the empire's remaining territory, and project a shared identity for the peoples of the empire—in short, one that would transform the image of the Ottoman state from that of an empire to that of a nation.

Although rarely—if ever—thronged with visitors, the museums of the Ottoman Empire act as traces for the shifts and uncertainties of the identity politics of their times. Museum display was a new language of power not only in the Ottoman Empire but in America, Europe, and European colonies around the globe. By choosing certain items to collect, those in charge of museums reify the metanarratives that order societies and their material culture and subsequently determine economic, aesthetic, and ideological values for select categories of objects. When placed in contexts of display, such objects expose the power to own as well as the power to construct the narratives that link objects within the format of exhibition. Increasingly during the late nineteenth century, exhibitionary institutions like museums and

world fairs displayed the bounty of wealth and progress and put them on view for the world to see.¹

In response to dynamic political contingencies, the Ottoman Empire developed diverse and independent collections to display those aspects of its identity that became vital to its independence and survival. Of the numerous museums and collections that developed in the last seventy years of empire, the smallest was devoted to the Islamic arts. Through an examination of the stunted development of this museum, the forefather of today's Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in Istanbul, this essay considers the contradictory ramifications inherent in the collection of Islamic arts in the Ottoman Empire and the changing implications of such a collection in the construction of national identities as the empire approached the volatile years of its demise.

The collection of Islamic arts emerged against a backdrop of already established European-style institutions of display. In 1846, the Ottoman Empire began to collect and exhibit the seeds of what would become the Ottoman Imperial Museum. This fledgling museum took the form of two allied collections: one of archaeological and one of military antiquities.² The prodigious collections of antique sculptures served to foster the empire's European aspirations by forging indigenous links to the Greco-Roman heritage as well as to assert the empire's territorial right to lands claimed by European archaeologists. While at first glance these exhibitions mimicked the Greco-Roman collections of European museums, they did so in large part to question the exclusivity of the Greek heritage claimed by modern European nation-states.³ As Homi Bhaba points out, such mimicry at once acts as a camouflage through which to fit into the model of dominant states and simultaneously displaces that model as a defensive position from which to counteract its dominance.⁴

While the antiquities collections nimbly scratched at the borders of European heritage, the military collections redrew those of the Ottoman legacy. By including enemies and armies in the tale of Ottoman history, these exhibits reformulated the Ottoman perception of history from the dynastic to the populist. Much as the reforms of the *Tanzimat* had functioned to create a state designed to serve rather than to dominate the people, the new history conceived of an empire that had emerged from the shared bravery and sacrifice of state and subjects alike, not simply a succession

of dynastic glories. Such displays replaced the projection of dynastic immortality with one that appreciated the martyrdom of soldiers for the Ottoman nation. Thus it primed soldiers for the many wars that beleaguered the empire before its ultimate downfall: the Crimean, the Balkan, the Russo-Turkish, the Great War, and finally the War for Turkish Independence.

These new museums did little to promote the Islamic identity of the empire, even though the reassertion of the caliphate was one of the primary interests of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909). In the west, as the empire lost many European territories, the sultan tried to retain some link with them by maintaining governance over Muslim minorities through his role as caliph, which the saltanate had assumed in 1517.⁵ In the east, such assertions of caliphal power were equally important in the face of Arab nationalism, which emphatically called into question the Ottoman right to the caliphate and in doing so implicitly questioned the link between the Islamic and the Ottoman.⁶ As Kayali points out, “by emphasizing his role as caliph, Abdülhamid generated support from Arabs, as well as from other Muslims within and outside the Ottoman Empire, at a time when the world of Islam was under Christian imperialist domination.”⁷ During the reign of Abdülhamid, the empire increasingly made use of Islamic symbolism to compete with nationalist symbols emerging throughout the empire.⁸

Still, even as the empire promoted its political identity as the leader of the Islamic world, it chose not to include works of art and culture pertaining to its Ottoman or Islamic identity in its museum until 1889. It was only at that relatively late date that the Council of State set out a revised administrative program for the Ottoman Imperial Museum that included a Department of Islamic Arts as one of six branches of the growing institution.⁹ As the empire weakened during the early twentieth century, the identification of Islamic works of art became increasingly important to the development of a sense of an Ottoman national identity. Did this imply an increasing interest in religion or in the politics of religious cohesion? Was this an “Islam” that designated religiosity or politics? The collection of Islamic arts in the late Ottoman Empire marks a moment of transition from the sectarian to the national, from the reli-

gious toward the secular, and from the imperial against the colonial.

The belated interest in Islamic antiquities at first seems ironic: the objects most readily accessible to Ottoman collectors—those in common use in mosques and elite households around the empire—were among the last to be collected. This sharply contrasts with the nineteenth-century development of museums in Europe, where galleries and museums assembled both religious and secular artworks in order to foster national spirit. The Ottoman Empire learned the art of museum-making from Europe yet denied the progressive narrative espoused by most European national museums. For example, the Louvre had been transformed into a museum as one of the first outward symbols of the new order brought about by the French Revolution. Gathering the insignia of church and crown alike for the public gaze, it declared the formulation of a new state (at least in theory) dedicated to public service. Like other universal survey museums, the Louvre developed extensive collections of Greco-Roman antiquities, which introduced an evolutionary narrative of Western heritage. Thus during their tour of the museum, visitors first encountered ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, Rome, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and then the arts of modern Western Europe.¹⁰ These categories of display established a temporal progression from the ancient to the modern that coincided with a geographic progression from the East to the West. In contrast, Ottoman museums jumped from one autonomous collection to another, each of which displayed a single aspect of the new Ottoman identity but none of which promoted a model of cultural progress with its apogee in Ottoman modernity. Thus the museum did not even try to include collections of Ottoman art to parallel the painting and sculpture galleries of the Louvre or the British National Gallery. Indeed, for many years Ottoman museums avoided the suggestion of a present moment for the empire, implying instead only multiple pasts from which it could garner various aspects of a modern identity. This disavowal of positivism coincided with a distrust of positivism as a belief heretical to Islamic norms.¹¹

The collection of Islamic arts within the Imperial Museum was the first to exhibit such a contemporary identity. Unlike Greek antiquities or military spolia, Islamic antiquities were not only part of the Ottoman

past; they were also part of the Ottoman present. The shift in interest suggested by the establishment of an Islamic arts section for the museum near the end of the nineteenth century reflects a growing interest in the immediate past of the Islamic world as well as growing nationalistic implications for this past. Certainly, this shift was not unique in Istanbul: in 1883, the Museum of Arab Art opened in Cairo, and Islamic archaeology emerged for the first time in 1885, with the excavation of Samarra. But it was not until 1893, with the Exposition d'Art Musulman in Paris that such arts became identified with religion rather than with region.¹²

Why is it that, in a taxonomic system obsessed with geography and history as the primary identifiers of communal identity, suddenly religion emerged as a category? The designation of new Islamic collections allowed for the display of a new category of objects without disturbing the time/space progression established by the display pattern of universal survey museums. The positivist organization of such European museums relied on a unique and hierarchical model for progress that would have been challenged by the presentation of multiple cultures, parallel in space and time, differing yet not competing in aesthetics and values. For an object to be displayed as Egyptian, Iranian, or Ottoman would have connoted its use in a locale with a secular history that could theoretically compete with the evolutionary model presented in the main body of the museum. Redefined as Islamic, the value of such an object came to be equated with an aesthetic practice assumed to span a wide range of histories, languages, cultures, and customs—indeed, perhaps to exist outside of time and even geography. In effect, by calling these objects Islamic, museums could consider them outside of time and place. In their quest to import Western models of progress, colonial powers often favored such a perception of their newly acquired territories. Much as “Orientalism assumed an unchanging Orient,” the idea of Islamic collections assumed a temporally static aesthetic for the Islamic world.¹³ It displayed the arts of “Islam . . . as a ‘cultural synthesis,’ . . . that could be studied apart from the economics, sociology, and politics of the Islamic peoples.”¹⁴ Moreover, through this designation, the word *Islamic* came to denote an aesthetic value as much as a religious one. By identifying objects with religion rather

than with region, such displays suggested two things: that all objects, even those designed for secular use, still somehow pertained to religion (perhaps because of the description of Islam as a way of life as well as a series of devotions) and/or that devotional objects should be moved from the metaphysical to the temporal realm for the sake of their protection and preservation in museums.

Perhaps in light of the Orientalist implications of the designation Islamic, it is ironic that this new category served nationalist purposes when put into practice in the Ottoman Empire. It becomes less ironic in light of the constant slippage between European collections and their Ottoman counterparts, wherein Ottoman museums mimicked their European forebears only to subvert the assumptions of power implicit in them. Just as the archaeological collections redefined Greek antiquities as part of the Ottoman (rather than the European) heritage, collections of Islamic antiquities reasserted the political affiliation between the Ottoman Empire and Islam. In order to promote Ottoman nationalism, the affinity between Muslim Ottoman citizens and Islam had to be harnessed as an identification with the Ottoman state. An emphasis on Islam as a national characteristic could mollify the many conservatives in the empire who worried that modernization would necessarily mean Westernization and, implicitly, Christianization. Moreover, by denying a national framework to the category of objects labeled as “Islamic,” the empire could avoid the problems of Arab nationalism plaguing its integrity in the real-life, political world outside of the museum. Within the Ottoman context, Islamic collections provided a counterpoint to the growing association between Arabs and Islam. In effect, the neutralization of difference promoted by a category of art designated as Islamic supported the Ottoman cause as effectively as that of colonial European powers.

The Ottoman Imperial Museum designated an Islamic Arts Division in 1889, but the collection grew very slowly. While Hellenic antiquities were housed in the lavish new Imperial Museum, a neoclassical building built for them on the grounds of the Topkapı Palace, the Islamic antiquities moved from site to site, first to an upstairs hall of the Imperial Museum and later to increasingly independent venues. Growing in the shadow of the antiquities collections, Islamic

collections were never published in catalogues, nor were they extensively publicized in newspapers. The only early description of the collection comes from a short section of an extensive 1895 article about the museum by its assistant director, Halil (Edhem):

At one time during the Middle Ages when in Europe and in Asia no trace of civilization remained and knowledge and science had become nearly completely extinct, Islam and the Arabs appeared as a vehicle for the formation of a new civilization. The advancement of knowledge and science and literature and art spread across the world, and the Ottomans were the inheritors of this with their acquisition of the caliphate.

Since today old Arab works and old Ottoman works are among quite desirable and rare antiquities, these are also now being collected in the Imperial Museum and are being arranged for display in a special hall. In this section, the most striking item is in the corner: an ornate tile *mihrāb* [prayer niche] from Karaman that is from the time of the Seljuk ruler Alaettin I. Stones with Kufic writing from the time of the Ahmed al-Malik of the Umayyad caliphate; writing samples of famous calligraphers; book bindings, which are testimony to the fine handicraft of Ottoman artisans; Edirne-work cabinets; mother-of-pearl inlay bookstands; ringstones with Kufic writings; and quite breathtaking Persian carpets decorate this hall.¹⁵

In introducing the collection, Halil links its establishment with a reminder to the viewer that Europe's ascendancy depended on a history of Arabo-Islamic science, a view often promoted by conservatives within the empire.¹⁶ Thus he presents the desire to remember the Islamic past as more than a simple act of self-reflection or nationalist self-promotion. From the first display of Islamic arts, the presentation of artifacts still living in the Ottoman present was also an act of resistance to European cultural hegemony. It balanced, or perhaps even completed, the Ottoman usurpation of the foundations of Europe represented by the archaeological antiquities on exhibit in the rest of the museum. Just as the wide-scale Ottoman collection and display of Hellenistic antiquities exposed the shaky foundations of an exclusive

pan-European Greek heritage, Halil suggests that the collection of Islamic arts underscored Europe's actual dependence on the Islamic world for its subsequent greatness. In these paragraphs, Halil simultaneously exposes Europe's dependence on the Islamic world and the Islamic world's dependence on the Ottoman Empire in its role as protector of the caliphate. Thus he conflates the Islamic with the Ottoman, producing a national, not a religious, identifier.

Like its European counterparts, the Ottoman museum used religious objects as national identifiers only by divesting them of their religious significance. The symmetrical organization of the display and the organization of the collection by material precluded its assessment in any sort of religious framework, where disparate objects would be used together in an architectural setting for the purpose of worship (figs. 1, 2). In the museum display, only the lanterns hanging from the ceiling and the carpets covering the floor retain their original spatial function. Yet, unlike in the mosque or tomb from which they came, the carpets were roped off from the very people who would have prayed on them in religious settings. Much as the museum's primary collections enforced secular notions through the display of pre-Islamic arts, the hall devoted to Islamic arts subverted the religious content of *mihrāb* and Qur'ān alike, transforming them into objects for the aesthetic rather than the spiritual gaze. Carol Duncan refers to the museum as a space of secular ritual.¹⁷ Indeed, while the architecture of the exterior—designed to recall a Greek temple, as the neoclassical tradition dictated for museum architecture—promoted a humanist, quasi-religious veneration of the antiquities within, the Islamic arts upstairs invested objects with a new and secular ritual: that of impartial, categorical examination.

While the inclusion of Islamic arts in the museum acknowledged their cultural value in a way otherwise ignored by the Imperial Museum, the removal of objects from religious contexts to the secular halls of a museum itself had revolutionary implications. In mosques, tombs, and dervish lodges, the objects collected by the museum had nonmaterial value associated with their function and sometimes also with their venerable association with figures from the past. Often such objects acted as relics or gained local meanings because of the legends and histories surrounding

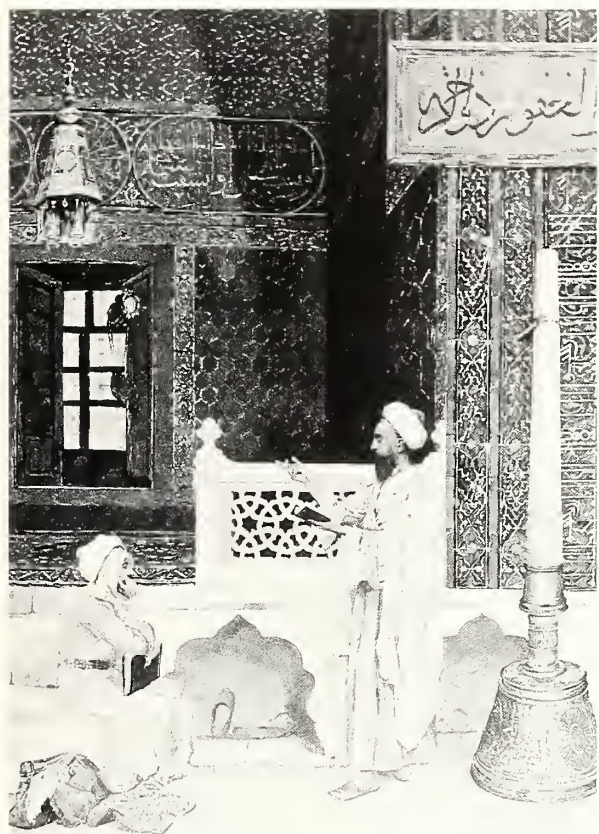


FIG. 3. *Osman Hamdi, In the Green Mosque of Bursa, oil on canvas, 1890, 81 × 59 cm. After Cezar, Sanatta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi, 727.*

their use. In the museum, they exchanged such value for the secular equivalents of aesthetics and historical rarity, becoming secular signs of national eminence. By redefining them as works of art to collect and display, the Islamic Arts Division of the Imperial Museum called into question the very identity of a devotional object.

Never explicitly stated, the radical implications of Islamic collections in a museum setting were not far from the consciousness of the museum's administration. As the Imperial Museum developed as a project expressing the cultural aspirations of the empire, its florescence in the late nineteenth century depended heavily on the leadership of its director, Osman Hamdi (1842–1910). Educated as a lawyer and as an artist in France, and known for his support of reformist politics, Osman Hamdi took on the roles of painter, educator, museum administrator, and archaeologist in his native land. Although neither his



FIG. 4. *Osman Hamdi, The Fountain of Life, oil on canvas, 1904. After Cezar, Sanatta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi, 714.*

private nor his professional correspondence documents the motivations behind his curatorship of the museum, many of his paintings suggest his interpretations of and hopes for the collections.

It was no surprise to Osman Hamdi that the new collections promoted a radical shift in Ottoman modes of education. Whereas once Ottomans learned about religion by reading the Qurʾān, in the museum they would learn about the nation through the objects that once surrounded the transmission of religious knowledge. In his 1890 work *In the Green Mosque of Bursa*, Osman Hamdi uses a Mamluk candle holder and a lamp from the Gebze Çoban Mustafa Pasha Mosque from the museum collections, setting them in the quintessential early Ottoman mosque, completed in 1424 (fig. 3).¹⁸ Here Osman Hamdi depicts himself seated, receiving the wisdom of a teacher who reads aloud to him from a Qurʾān, quite possibly one in

the collection. Similarly, in the 1904 work *The Fountain of Life*, he depicts himself reading the same Qurʾān in front of a fountain in the Tiled Pavilion surrounded by objects from the museum's Islamic collection (fig. 4).¹⁹ As the curator of these collections, Osman Hamdi subsumed the age-old role of religious scholar to the modern role of secular educator, suggesting this relationship by depicting its inversion in his paintings. In such self-portraits, he transposes his modern role into an anachronistic, timeless, and quintessentially Ottoman setting, emphasizing his aspirations more as an Ottoman citizen and innovator than as an aspiring European. One might even wonder whether the fountain of life in the title refers to the physical site behind him or to the activity of erudition in which he—and the museum—is engaged. Osman Hamdi's adoption of the Orientalist style of painting for his dissections of the museum, an organ of identity production, underscores both his and the museum's investment in the colonial art of mimicry.

Such strategies came at a high cultural cost, as suggested in the subtle symbolic drama of Osman Hamdi's 1901 work *Mihrāb* (fig. 5). In this painting, a woman, modeled after Osman Hamdi's wife, sits on an inlaid Qurʾān stand in front of the *mihrāb*. She displaces many copies of the Qurʾān, which lie disheveled at her feet. Although the incense at the foot of the *mihrāb* continues to burn, the candle beside it stands extinguished. All of the objects in the picture—the Qurʾān stand, the incense burner, the candle holder, and quite probably the Qurʾāns as well—belonged to the growing collections of the Islamic section of the museum.²⁰ While the removal of the *mihrāb* and the Qurʾān stand to the museum preserved them as objects of fine art, this act simultaneously plundered their functions as aids to religious devotion. The museum saved devotional objects, but in doing so it secularized them.

Could any image be more shocking? As an allegorical representation of the museum, the painting implicates the Islamic collections of the museum in a secularist revolution that replaces religion with Western mores and a disregard of religion in favor of art and the material world, which it favors. In the museum, an aesthetic appreciation of Islamic arts displaces the worship of the Qurʾān, just as this figure sits directly between the viewer and the *mihrāb*, precluding prayer. She, along with all that she represents, dis-



FIG. 5. Osman Hamdi, *Mihrāb*, oil on canvas, 1901, 201 × 108 cm. Collection of Demirbank. After Cezar, Sanatta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi, 713.

places the Qurʾān on its stand and becomes the object of devotion. In one guise, this figure, exposed in body and yet distant in her gaze, suggests the West: beautiful, alluring, distracting, and yet impassive and unattainable. Still, by placing a portrait of his own wife in front of the *mihrāb*, Osman Hamdi made literal the classical metaphor between the beloved and the *qibla* common in Persian poetry. Hafez writes, "Whoever comes to the *ka'beh* of your street / Is like one praying before the *qibla* of your eyebrows."²¹ Furthermore, during the late nineteenth century,

feminization of the national spirit (akin to the notion of the French *patrie*) entered the Ottoman tradition. Thus the painting implicates the museum in an act of national devotion akin to that of the personal beloved and also marked a moment of transition in the symbolism ascribed to the female form. With this *tour de force* of layered metaphor spanning several traditions, Osman Hamdi highlights the pivotal role of the museum in constructing a revolutionary bridge from the traditional into the modern sphere.

How did such an ideological revolution play out in the material world? Despite the radical ramifications, the new value that emerged for Islamic artifacts as aesthetic objects subject to a secular gaze resulted not from existing secular ideals but from the very practical issue of theft. At the end of the nineteenth century, European travelers and collectors alike wanted Islamic artifacts for private and public collections of Islamic art. As their price rose, local Ottoman citizens were often willing to sell the valuables of their local mosques to an increasingly lucrative market. As with Hellenic antiquities, the collection of Islamic antiquities was precipitated by the European desire for collection as much as by the ideological issues of cultural identification that followed to justify the museum's growing interests.

Scattered documentary reports of museum acquisitions provide clues about the changing modes of evaluation for Islamic artifacts. Before European collecting became an issue, acquisitions depended primarily on practical considerations in mosques. Among the first carpets included in the collections, those from the Sultan Ahmet Mosque and the mosque of the Kaniller village in the province of Izmir were removed to the museum because, in addition to being old, they were deemed unhealthful for continued use in the mosques.²² In the documents concerning their transfer from mosque to museum, two types of value accrue to the carpets. Since they performed a useful function in the mosques, their removal to the museum depended on their replacement with new substitutes. The mosques were not perceived to have lost something of extrafunctional value due to the historicity of the items: new carpets could act as substitutes with no additional provisions made for their antique or aesthetic value. Indeed, in practical terms, new carpets would have greater value

because of their cleanliness. The antique value of the carpets came into play only through the museum's interest in them; outside of the museum their historicity was perceived to have little value.

The value assigned to works of Islamic art shifted as reports of their theft by Europeans began to circulate. No longer left to perform their religiously prescribed functions within holy spaces, aesthetically prized historical carpets, Qur'āns, tiles, and metalwork began to develop a market among visiting Europeans, who were eager to collect during their touristic forays into the Ottoman Empire. Osman Hamdi's 1905 painting *The Iranian Carpet Seller* (fig. 6), replete with the familiar cast of museum objects, depicts a contemporary problem: unlike Hellenic antiquities, the commodification and export of which was at least partially legislated, valuable Islamic antiques were being sold to Europeans, both as touristic souvenirs and for museum collections. It was not until 1906 that a revision of the antiquities law (*Asar-i Atika Nizamnamesi*), drafted by Osman Hamdi, placed the same restrictions on Islamic and Ottoman artworks leaving the empire as on Hellenic antiquities, which had been fully regulated since 1884.²³ Like Hellenic antiquities, Islamic antiquities gained legislative interest only after they began to be smuggled out of the country with impunity.

Despite Abdülhamid's emphasis on the Islamic identity of the Ottoman state, the Islamic collections of the Imperial Museum did not flourish fully until the end of his reign. It was only during and after the constitutionalist Young Turk Revolution of 1908–10 that concern over Islamic antiquities began to enter public discourse with any frequency, in large part because of the Young Turks' interest in increased communication between the state and the populace. In 1910, newspapers began to report thefts of tiles, carpets, and *kilims* (flat-woven carpets) from historical sites as far afield as Konya and its environs.²⁴ As a result of such reports the museum sent a long note to the Ministry of Education emphasizing the necessity actively to collect antiquities in the museum and requiring the participation of the Ministry of Pious Foundations in the preservation and maintenance of historical sites. As explained by the note,

Since it is necessary to protect the objects of value, old and new, of the mosques in Istanbul



FIG. 6. *Osman Hamdi, The Iranian Carpet Seller. After Cezar, Sanatta Batı'ya Açılıs ve Osman Hamdi, 363.*

and in outlying areas, the Ministry of Education is prepared to consider the proposition of guarding old objects in the Tiled Pavilion provided that the Ministry of Pious Foundations takes measures to preserve recent works; and in order to prevent the transfer of even one of the stolen objects from the recent theft of [various lamps and vases from several mosques of Bursa and Eskisehir] to European museums, the Ministry of Education is charged with reporting the matter to the Office of Customs under the Ministry of Finance.²⁵

It was not so much the inherent value of the objects that led to their collection but a distaste for the idea that Europeans would benefit from their theft, collecting those objects and, after having exported them, endowing them with aesthetic and exotic value in their museums. The ideology of the Young Turks began to transform the Islamic arts collection into an overt means of nationalist expression and resistance against European cultural subsumation. In an environment pushing toward a Turkish identity independent of religion, objects that had originally had only religious value—or, beyond value, pricelessness—gained an aesthetic/historical value with which they could represent the country in the museum, which isolated them from their original religious roles. The

danger of their loss lay not in their absence but in the degree of profit possible from those items once they entered European collections.

The new market value of such objects required local officials to take new measures concerning old sites. In this note from the Police Commissariat of Beşiktaş to the Istanbul head of police, the local police chief complains of the potential dangers brought by tourists around the historical tomb of Barbaros Hayreddin Pasha:

The standard of the tomb of Barbaros Hayreddin Pasha, in Beşiktaş, which dates from his first campaigns, is of a great historical value, and it seems that Italian visitors have proposed to buy it for 6,000 liras. Many foreigners have recently been wandering around this tomb, and the balustrade around it is getting signs of wear. We are concerned that the guardian may steal the standard because of its price; we request that, in accord with recent governmental decisions, this standard should be placed in the care of the Imperial Museum in order not to make way for the theft of a valuable historical object.²⁶

Thefts made it necessary to assign value to objects of Islamic art that had previously never been considered

in the light of commerce. “Much as some experts have declared it impossible to estimate the value of seventy-two tile pieces from the time of the architect Sinan . . . stolen from the tomb of Sokollu Mehmet Pasha in Eyüb, it seems necessary to affix a price to them in order to serve as a basis for the legal process.”²⁷ In order to determine the value of such objects, the museum began to seek the services of antique dealers, who often were themselves involved in the shady deals of transferring stolen goods to collectors.²⁸

The new values assigned to objects of Islamic art made it necessary for the museum to assume a more active acquisition policy. In 1910, the Ministry of Public Education decided to set up a commission under the leadership of the director of the Imperial Museum in order to determine the “appropriate methods and sturdy provisions” for the preservation of “Islamic and Ottoman arts” in the empire. For the first time, this statement provided a classificatory group for these objects that explicitly linked the secular term *Islamic* with the national term *Ottoman*. The commission was assigned to divide the tasks of conservation and collection such that the Ministry of Pious Foundations would be responsible for the conservation of consecrated buildings, but the museum administration would be responsible for the preservation of mosaics, tiles, and other ornaments that could be removed from the surfaces of build-

ings.²⁹ Thus objects whose sole purpose had been to enhance the experience of worship through their inclusion as part of consecrated buildings became officially divested of this role. They were simultaneously reduced as aesthetic and historical works as they were raised as objects of market and museum value. After the French Revolution, one of the powerful symbols of the new order had been the removal of church regalia to the secular halls of the museum.³⁰ In the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turk Revolution was slowly setting the stage for the secularist revolution that was to come only a decade later: already, objects vested with religious significance were being recontextualized in a historical and national museum collection.

With the plans for the construction of a new museum associated with the Ministry of Pious Foundations, in 1908 the Islamic collection moved from the upper corner of the archaeology museum building to the Tiled Pavilion (fig. 7).³¹ This move was made possible by the opening of the third wing of the Imperial Museum in 1908, which provided enough new display space to hold the antiquities that had remained in the Tiled Pavilion until that time. In giving the collection of Islamic and Ottoman art its own building, the move significantly altered the spatial relation between the collection of ancient antiquities and the collection of Islamic and Ottoman antiquities. Previously, the Islamic collections had



FIG. 7. *The Islamic Collections Displayed in the Tiled Pavilion, 1909. After Halil (Edhem), Das Osmanischen Antikenmuseum.*

FIG. 8. *Exterior of the Imperial Museum and the Tiled Pavilion, ca. 1892. Abdülhamid Albums, no. 90518, courtesy of the IRCICA, Istanbul.*



settled into the recesses of the museum building as if an afterthought. Surrounded by the fifteenth-century architecture of the Tiled Pavilion, they confronted the legacy of the ancients with a very different cultural and historical aesthetic, which represented a local, rather than an adoptive, history. Face to face on the outer precincts of the Topkapi Palace, the two buildings suggested a showdown of historical identities for the emerging Ottoman nation (fig. 8).

The growing interest in Islamic and Ottoman arts found expression not only in the preservation of consecrated sites and the objects associated with them but in a newfound interest in historical sites associated with the Ottoman family. In June 1911, the commission for Ottoman history was sent to investigate a report concerning the house that Osman had occupied in Bilecik, even though no documents could be found to corroborate the rumor that the house had belonged to Osman.³² In 1911 the Ministry of the Interior sent out a directive ordering the collection of standards, weapons, shields, and military clothing from the greater Bursa region, identifying their value as both national and artistic.³³ As Deringil points out, at this time “a veritable cult of Ottomania was created around the historical heritage of the Ottoman dynasty, as Abdülhamid focused in an unprecedented fashion on the ‘creation myth’ of the Ottoman State.”³⁴ Along with his reassertion of caliphal

presence, Abdülhamid manifested his dynastic heritage in large part through the glorification of his forebears as political and religious heroes. The inclusion of items of dynastic significance within the Islamic framework of the museum served to conflate the national with the religious, underscoring the indivisibility of Ottoman and Islamic patriotism.

In 1914, the Islamic collections of the Imperial Museum moved to the former charitable dining areas (*imaret*) of the Süleymaniye complex. The new Museum of Pious Foundations (*Evkaf Müzesi*) opened on 14 April, a date chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the coronation of Sultan Mehmet V Reshad. In their new location, objects culled from the historical mosques and tombs of the Ottoman Empire became resituated to a liminal space between the secularist display strategy of the museum and the directorship of the Ministry of Pious Foundations, interested more in the religious than in the aesthetic value of the objects. With this return to a religious administrative framework, perhaps it is not so surprising that this museum established to protect Islamic antiquities soon lost many of its valuable carpets to thieves.³⁵

Far from subsiding during the war years, the interest in Islamic antiquities became increasingly tied to nationalist projects and projections. In 1915, the Commission for Examination of Antiquities (*Tedkiki Asar-i Atika Encümeni*) became charged with the

investigation of works of “Turkish civilization, Islam, and knowledge of the nation” and with the publication of its findings.³⁶ In the same year, the commission for the protection of antiquities (*Muhafaza-i Asar-e Atika Encümeni*) was organized in order to supervise the national adherence to the fifth section of the antiquities law, which listed all the mobile and immobile objects to which the law applied.³⁷

Among their most important activities, they issued a report concerning the state of the Topkapı Palace in which, for the first time, Ottoman antiquities became extensively and explicitly identified with the preservation of a national heritage, and the preservation of objects became explicitly linked to the memory of national history.³⁸ “Every nation,” the commission declared, “makes the necessary provisions for the preservation of its fine arts and monuments and thus preserves the endless virtues of its ancestors as a lesson in civilization for its descendants.” The Topkapı Palace was identified as uniquely important in that it was the only site where nonpublic and nonreligious architectural examples had been preserved for several centuries. The commission cast the preservation of buildings as equivalent to the preservation of four hundred years of Ottoman history, which contained the tilework, decoration, and architectural details that constituted “a national art history.”³⁹ For the first time, Ottoman antiquities were designated solely in national rather than religious terms.

The continued interest of the government in Ottoman antiquities during the war, and their increasing recasting of them as Ottoman and national rather than Islamic, suggests that the value associated with these objects had acquired a thoroughly nationalist flavor. The official collection of Islamic artwork signified the rise of patriotic self-awareness in the face of imperial dissolution, reflected new reactions to emergent nationalisms in the former empire, and also foreshadowed secular notions of Islam, which would develop fully under the Turkish Republic.

Over the course of thirty years, the Ottoman government developed a collection of Islamic antiquities from two disparate and opposed paths. On the one hand, the museum divested objects originally used in Islamic practice of their religious import through the secularizing processes of museum collection, display, and aesthetic examination. On the other, objects

that had originally been part of the political sphere of the Ottoman dynasty came to be honored under the rubric of the religious sphere. Both processes supported production of an Ottoman national identity through the conflation of the Ottoman with the Islamic, of the political with the devotional. Ironically, while such a scheme of categorization emerged from within the strategies of European imperial thought, it became a strategic maneuver within the Ottoman quest for a cohesive national identity. □

Notes

1. Among the prodigious literature in museum studies that has recently emerged, the following are of particular interest to this discussion: Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Gwendolyn Wright, ed., *The Formation of National Collections of Art and Archaeology* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1996); Daniel Sherman et al., *Museum Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

2. Wendy M. K. Shaw, “Possessors and Possessed: Objects, Museums and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1846–1923” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1999).

3. Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 7–10.

4. Homi Bhaba discusses the mode of colonial mimicry at length in “Of Mimicry and Man,” *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85–92.

5. Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1998), 46–49.

6. Selim Deringil, “Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman State—The Reign of Abdulhamid II,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23, 3 (August 1991): 345–59.

7. Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 35.

8. Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey:*

The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 129.

9. Mustafa Cezar, *Sanatta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Erol Kerim Aksoy Kültür, Eğitim, Spor ve Sağlık Vakfı Yayını, 1995), 547.

10. Carol Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Stephen D. Lavine (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 88.

11. Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 45.

12. Stephen Verno, "Islamic Archaeology," *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 3, 8.

13. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 96.

14. Said, *Orientalism*, 105.

15. Halil (Edhem), "Müze-ye Hümayun," *Tercuman-i Hakikat/Servet-i Fünun* 1313 (numero special et unique), 104.

16. Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 36.

17. Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 7–12.

18. V. Bilgin Demirsar, *Osman Hamdi Tablolarında Gerçekle İlişkiler* (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1989), 107–8.

19. Demirsar, *Osman Hamdi*, 131–33. The first pavilion of the Topkapı Palace, the Tiled Pavilion, is located directly across from the Imperial Museum building. At this time, it still housed part of the Hellenic Antiquities collection.

20. Demirsar, *Osman Hamdi*, 119.

21. Parviz Khanlari, *Devan-e Hafez* (Tehran 1359/1980), 98. Many thanks to Professor Richard Davis for providing this insight and this example.

22. Istanbul Prime Minister's Archives Documents Y.A-HUS 281:90, 28:3.1311 (8 October 1893); Y.A-HUS 327:19, 12.11.1311 (18 May 1894); Irade-i Hususiye 1430, 1312.Za.26 (21 May 1895).

23. The 1906 antiquities law was so comprehensive that it not only stayed in effect for the rest of the Ottoman period but was adopted by the Republic of Turkey and remained in effect with only minor modifications until 1973.

24. *Saadet* 432 (14 March 1326/27 March 1910) and *Sabah* 7376 (22 March 1326/6 April 1910).

25. Istanbul Archives of the Prime Minister BEO 276305/ 29 Tesrin-sani 1325/12 December 1909.

26. Document of 1910 cited in Zarif Orgun and Serap Aykoç, "La Fondation du Musée Turque et le Musée des Arts Turcs et Islamiques," *Collection Turcica II, Travaux et recherches en Turquie* 1982 (Strasbourg, 1984), 144–45.

27. Document of 1909 cited in Orgun and Aykoç, "Fondation du Musée Turque," 130.

28. Archaeology museum document no. 37, 21 July 1325, cited in Nazan Ölçer, *Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi: Kilimler* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1988), 38.

29. Orgun and Aykoç, "Fondation du Musée Turque," 140–41.

30. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 167.

31. Halil (Edhem), *Das Osmanischen Antikenmuseum in Konstantinopel* (Lipzig, 1909).

32. Istanbul Archives of the Prime Minister DH.ID 28-1:21/ 1329.Ca.4/1 June 1911.

33. Istanbul Archives of the Prime Minister DH.ID 28-1:18/ 1329.R.22/15 September 1911.

34. Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 31.

35. Orgun and Aykoç, "Fondation du Musée Turque," 135.

36. Istanbul Archives of the Prime Minister MV 239:22; 1333.Ca.5/19 April 1915.

37. Istanbul Archives of the Prime Minister MV 212:115/ 1336.L.22/30 July 1918. This document declares the establishment of this commission three years after its report concerning the Topkapı Palace. In "Türkiye'de Müzecilik," *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1984), 1465, Sumer Atasoy cites 1917 as the year in which the commission was established. Such discrepancies suggest that the commission may have been disbanded and reestablished several times during the war years.

38. At this time, the Topkapı Palace, home to the sultans until 1853, had for the most part fallen into grave disrepair. Some sections, such as the apartments of the Holy Mantle and the Baghdad pavilion, retained annual ceremonial functions. Certain parts of the harem continued to house former servants to the royal family. The grounds also included a small and short-lived ceramics museum. But the palace as a whole would not become a museum until after the establishment of the Republic.

39. Sedat Hakki Eldem, *Topkapı Sarayı* (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1982), 100–101.

Collecting the “Orient” at the Met: Early Tastemakers in America

ABSTRACT

The collection of Islamic art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is universally considered to be the largest comprehensive collection of this art anywhere on the globe. Of the approximately 11,000 objects from the Muslim world housed in the Metropolitan Museum, almost 60 percent was acquired before 1932, the year in which a properly constituted department devoted to the art of the Islamic world was inaugurated. This essay takes up the following questions: How and why did these nearly 6,000 objects come to the fledgling museum during the first sixty years of its existence? What were the circumstances of this particular period that engendered such an interest in this “exotic” area of the world? Who were some of the individuals effecting this influx? What kind and quality of objects were entering the collection? In short, what or who were these early tastemakers, and what taste did they mold?



STREET OF CONSTANTINOPLE.
Midway Plaisance.

FIG. 1. *Street of Constantinople, Midway Plaisance, from Glimpses of the World's Fair: A Selection of Gems of the White City Seen through a Camera (Chicago, 1893). Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1963 (63.698.27).*

AS THE MILLENNIUM draws to a close, the collection of Islamic art housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is universally considered to be the largest comprehensive collection of this art anywhere on the globe.¹ Scholars, students, and amateurs in the field of Islamic art history have long recognized the stature of the Met collection, but few seem to have considered it as more than a statistic to impart. When this phenomenon is carefully contemplated, however, is it not truly amazing that one of the youngest of the world's great art museums, founded only in 1870 and in a place far removed from the Middle East, should hold the premier position in this field?

This standing is even more astonishing given that of the approximately 11,000 objects from the Muslim world housed in the Metropolitan Museum, almost 60 percent was acquired before 1932, the year in which a properly constituted department devoted to the art of the Islamic world was inaugurated. Thus, almost 6,000 of these objects entered the collection before there was even an Islamic department in the museum.

How and why did these objects come to the fledgling museum during the first sixty years of its existence? What were the circumstances of this particular period that engendered such an interest in this “exotic” area of the world? Who were some of the individuals effecting this influx? What kind and quality of objects were entering the collection? In short, what or who were these early tastemakers, and what taste did they mold?

During the last quarter of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth centuries, the great interest in travel to the Middle East that had earlier spawned a vast travel literature in Europe was to be found in America as well. Some of the travelers during this period were artists whose images of or motifs from the “Orient” were influential in fueling a nascent curiosity about the Islamic world and its art. Also part of the travel fever and equally important in creating an interest in the Middle East in America at this time were the four international expositions held in the United States during the period under discussion: two in Philadelphia—one in 1876 and the other in 1926—a third in Chicago in 1893, and another in St. Louis in 1904. Each of these fairs, like their Eu-

ropean counterparts, to a greater or lesser extent offered its visitors the opportunity to take an imaginary journey through a number of countries, including those of the Islamic world. Like today's Disneyland and Disneyworld, they essentially encouraged “tourism, *en place*” (fig. 1).²

For the Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia from 10 May to 10 November 1876, the governments of Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey erected separate pavilions. For the Egyptian pavilion alone, 274 packages weighing 68,640 pounds were shipped from Alexandria, and Khedive Ismā‘il (r. 1863–79) appropriated \$60,000.00 (\$940,000.00 in today's economy) for the creation of his country's exhibit.³ Much of the material displayed at the fair never returned to its homeland. Not only were objects sold during the exhibition itself, but when the exposition closed, certain of the artifacts and other exhibits from the Islamic world were sold at auction, where they were “eagerly purchased at high rates by connoisseurs and bric-a-brac hunters”; others were bought by museums and still others exchanged.⁴ Thus, many of the objects and architectural decorations that were brought to Philadelphia to represent a particular culture remained in the United States to stimulate further interest in that culture.

At the World's Columbian Exposition organized in Chicago in 1893 to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, an entire Cairo street was erected: shops, houses, a café, a mosque, two obelisks, a “Temple of Luxor,” and a theater with belly dancers. To insure that the street scenes be as authentic as possible, actual architectural elements (which were replaced in the Egyptian capital with copies of the originals!) were removed from buildings in Cairo and sent to Chicago.⁵ In addition to Egypt and Persia, Algeria, Palestine, Tunisia, and Turkey were represented at the fair, and a reproduction of a Moorish palace was included as well, with a palm garden copied from those at the Alhambra.⁶

The third international American exposition of the period was the Louisiana Purchase Exposition mounted in St. Louis in 1904. In addition to the large and impressive Imperial Persian Pavilion, there was the H. E. Benguiat & Son Pavilion, constructed “in the old Damascus style of architecture,” where some

of the objects from the H. Ephraim Benguiat Fine Art Museum Collection were exhibited. The most popular part of this dealer's display, however, was doubtless what Mr. Benguiat called the Danascus Palace, a Syrian Ottoman interior consisting of two rooms separated by a courtyard with a marble mosaic fountain.⁷ He attempted to furnish these three areas with objects of the period and thus visually to encapsulate eighteenth-century Syrian Ottoman culture for the visitor—an excellent example of how these fairs “constructed” the Orient, to paraphrase Edward Said in his now-classic *Orientalism*.⁸

For the Sesquicentennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1926, Arthur Upham Pope was made the special commissioner for Persia. That country's pavilion, designed by the Philadelphia architect Carl Ziegler in consultation with Pope, attempted to reproduce the seventeenth-century Masjid-i Shah (Royal Mosque) in Isfahan.⁹ In addition to this architectural display, the director of the Fine Arts section of the fair gave Pope several large galleries to be used exclusively for exhibiting Persian works of art. When the exposition closed, Pope arranged for a continuation of the Persian exhibition—enlarged by additional loans and known as the First International Exhibition of Persian Art—to be held in Philadelphia's Memorial Hall in November 1926. Pope also organized a congress to go with this show of approximately 500 objects. In a series of five articles on the exhibition and the accompanying congress, *Art News* judged both events a great success.¹⁰

Despite the obvious pitfalls of attempting to depict an entire culture or cultures in what can only be seen as a series of elaborate “period rooms”—often animated with actors indigenous to the countries represented—these expositions greatly stimulated the growing interest in the “Orient” for they offered quick and seemingly realistic impressions of the societies and cultures they purported to represent.

AS MENTIONED ABOVE, during the period covered here there was no department of Islamic art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Nor was Islamic art taught at any university in the United States.¹¹ What expertise in the field did exist was concentrated, for the most part, in the hands of two groups of individuals: dealers and collectors,

with the former very often teaching and guiding the latter, who appear to have been eager and exceptional students.

The first group—the dealers—was a relatively small but influential clique of men who, with few exceptions, were of Middle Eastern origin and called themselves “antiquarians,” “collectors,” “connoisseurs,” “excavators of historic sites,” “experts,” “indefatigable explorers,” or “travelers.” It was these men who were setting up exhibitions in museums, international expositions, and galleries, who were writing catalogues, buying objects, excavating, making themselves available for consultation and advice, attempting to interest museum directors and collectors in their field, and lastly selling objects from their “collections” either privately or at auctions. In fact, except for the final item in their “job description,” they performed many of the functions of today's curators. Two of them must even have thought of themselves as such, calling their galleries museums. Unlike today's dealers, these men had large inventories. In addition to buying Islamic objects from many of the large general collections that were being dispersed at auction during this period in both Europe and America, they or their collaborators, as we shall see, conducted excavations in a number of Middle Eastern countries with the blessing of the governments involved.

In 1908 Azeez Khayat, a native of Lebanon who founded his New York City gallery in 1892, said of both Islamic and pre-Islamic glass, “the best antique Art Galleries in Europe . . . cannot get any, because I control the supply and bring it all to you; but this may be the last chance, as last year my finds were very few and these fine pieces I am offering to you now are from the finds of the last three years.”¹² In 1924 his son, Victor, reported, “most of the collection comes from our recent findings and gatherings in Egypt, Palestine and Syria, where I spent the last six months at our excavations. . . . The finest pieces of glass come from Syria and Palestine where excavations are now forbidden. My father, Azeez Khayat, is the only individual who has permission to dig, together with the museum authorities.”¹³ The preface to the catalogue of an exhibition organized by Hagop Kevorkian in 1914 acknowledges that “thanks are therefore due to Mr. Kevorkian . . . for a second visit to N.Y. . . . He brings with him hundreds of examples,



FIG. 2. *View of Kevorkian's excavations at Rayy, Iran, ca. 1904. (The excavator, wearing a pith helmet, can be seen at center.)*

the results of his excavations and explorations." In the introductory note of the catalogue for the 1926 auction of objects from his collection, this native of Kayseri, Turkey, maintains that the assemblage of "Persian decorated faience . . . [is] the result of many years work in collecting and excavating" (fig. 2).¹⁴ Hassan Khan Monif, a native of Iran, reveals in the foreword to the catalogue of the 1929 auction of objects from his collection, "to supervise my excavations and to collect more rare pieces, I pay a visit each summer to the Near Eastern countries. . . . Persian antiques are becoming more and more scarce in Persia, and their prices are rising every year."¹⁵

Kirkor Minassian, hailing like Kevorkian from Kayseri, Turkey, does not seem to have conducted excavations but rather to have acquired many of the objects in his collection through extensive travels. The foreword to the catalogue of a loan exhibition in May 1925 at the Wadsworth Atheneum observes that Minassian had come from Paris a decade before (actually in 1916), "bringing with him . . . part of the large collection which he had been years in making. He was one of the earliest connoisseurs to gather the pottery, miniatures, textiles, bronzes and other objects from Persia and the Nearer Orient where he has traveled extensively. . . . Mr. Minassian was the first

modern traveler to visit this inaccessible Caucasian town [Kubatchi] in 1904."¹⁶

As a paradigmatic case of the "expert," I have chosen the "antiquarian" Dikran Garabed Kelekian (1868–1951) since a great deal more has been ascertainable about his career than about that of any of his colleagues. Born in Kayseri, Turkey, Kelekian first came to the United States at the age of twenty-five.¹⁷ This maiden voyage seems to have been prompted by the World's Columbian Exposition, discussed above, which was held in Chicago from 1 May to 26 October 1893.¹⁸ We know very little about his participation in this exposition except that he must have participated in the exhibit of Persia, which was represented by "ancient and modern carpets of various sizes and qualities for floors, divans, together with curtains and door hangings, samples of silk needlework and tapestries. . . . The exhibit is typically and beautifully Persian."¹⁹

Kelekian opened his first gallery, called *Le Musée de Bosphore*, at 303 Fifth Avenue, New York City, shortly after his arrival in America (fig. 3). The introduction to a small catalogue he published in 1899 entitled *The Arts of Persia and the Levant* remarks that "his shop is a veritable museum, but one supplied with a constant succession of new objects fresh

FIG. 3. *Le Musée de Bosphore*, New York City, 1899.



from the inexhaustible East, or from the great collections that yearly come under the auctioneer's hammer. . . . To visit Kelekian's is to live an hour in the enchanted atmosphere of the Arabian Nights."

In 1895 Kelekian lent his collection of eighty-four textiles to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Henry G. Marquand, its president at that time, gave him a room in which to exhibit these objects and encouraged Kelekian to continue collecting. One wonders whether or not these items had previously been shown at the Columbian Exposition and, being easily transportable, had been brought to this country by Kelekian on his initial voyage. He must have taken objects with him when he set off for the United States since the title of his 1910 catalogue, *The Kelekian Collection of Persian and Analogous Potteries 1885-1910*, implies that the work contains objects he collected during that twenty-five-year period, and in the introduction he specifically calls it "a record of my study of the Persian potteries covering a period of twenty-six years, and my work in collecting them up to the present time." Between 1885 and March 1893 he was, presumably, still in Turkey

or en route to the United States. Thus, it might be safe to assume that his collecting began in his native land.

By December 1895 his letterhead indicates that he had moved *Le Musée de Bosphore* to 390 Fifth Avenue, that he still had an association with Constantinople, and that by now he had a gallery in Paris as well. The same letterhead also boasts that he had been the recipient of a "premium awarded in every branch at the World's Columbian Exposition." By 1912, Constantinople had been dropped from his letterhead, but Cairo (Continental Hotel) had been added to the Paris and New York addresses. It is not certain when he opened his Cairo gallery, but presumably it was founded more to establish a presence in that city so as to increase his inventory than to sell objects there.

A letter of 26 March 1898 to Marquand reveals that Kelekian had acquired nearly all of the "Persian" pottery sold at the New York auction of Charles A. Dana.²⁰ He was "painfully surprised" that he was the only person interested in such objects, concluding that "people have not had the opportunity of seeing and cultivating a taste for this line of art." Attempting to rectify this problem, he then proposed to the

Metropolitan’s president that another exhibition, of these and other objects in his collection, be held at the museum for six months while he was away for the summer. This was to become the second show of his objects at the Met in three years.

In 1902 this young Armenian entrepreneur from Turkey was appointed as the Persian consul in New York; President Theodore Roosevelt accepted his credentials, and his gallery became the Persian consulate—perhaps the first in the United States. As the Imperial Persian commissioner-general at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904 (fig. 4), he exhibited a hundred of his objects in the Imperial Persian Pavilion in the Palace of Varied Industries and published for the occasion a *Catalogue of Ceramics, Textiles, Rare Rugs, Jewelry and Manuscripts from the Private Collection of Dikran Khan Kelekian*.²¹ Although the Persian lion and sun symbol appears as a logo at the top of the title page of this work, not all of the objects in his exhibition were Persian. Several were actually labeled Turkish, and others were called Persian that were not.

This conflation of Arab, Persian, and Turkish arts under the rubric “Persian” seems to have been very common during this period²² and was to become even more prevalent under the strong influence of Arthur Upham Pope.²³ In the preface to the catalogue of the 1903 auction of objects from the Kelekian collection at the American Art Galleries, such conflation, and most probably confusion, is obvious:

It was in Persia, or at the hands of Persian artists, that the decaying art of the old Byzantine provinces took on the form which we call “Arab.” Persian artists were for long the foremost in the shops of Damascus, Cairo, Broussa, Rhodes. It was their taste and skill that gave a new life and character to the stiff Byzantine forms. In Persia, this Eastern Medieval art called “Arab” rose to perfection.

And, following G. Schmoranz, the section on glass posits that the Cairene mosque lamps were made in Syria, mostly by Persian artists.²⁴ In Kelekian’s *The Potteries of Persia*, published in 1909, a number of the pieces illustrated are not from that country at all: a molded monochrome turquoise Syrian tile, two luster-painted objects—a Fatimid jar from Egypt as well

as a ewer of the so-called Tell Minis type—and numerous Turkish and Syrian objects of the Ottoman period.²⁵

In this work Kelekian takes credit for introducing to the market so-called Kubatchi pottery—a series of wares made from the late fifteenth through the seventeenth century and taking their name from the town in present-day Daghestan where many of them were found. He relates that he bought his first group of eight plates of this type in about 1904 from an Italian traveler (“soon after the opening up of some of the remote provinces of the Caucasus to European communication” and the year Kirkor Minassian first visited that town). Kelekian

immediately dispatched a messenger to Persia to look for more. He spent many months in a fruitless search and came back empty-handed. Later another of my agents undertook the quest. He set out for the East, and at Boukkara [*sic*], by a stroke of good luck, he encountered two Circassians, Hassan and Aumeratta, who had come



FIG. 4. Dikran Kelekian, ca. 1904.



FIG. 5. *View of Kelekian gallery at 2 place Vendôme, Paris, ca. 1912. (Could two of these men from Kubatchi be Hassan and Anmeratta?)*

into a local fair with a variety of merchandise to sell. In their pack was one of the polychrome plates. Having stumbled on this scent, my man with the assistance of the two natives, succeeded in penetrating to the little town in the Circassian hills, where the first plates came from. Here he found the source which has since sent out so many of these lovely polychrome potteries.²⁶ (figs. 5, 6, and 7)

The practice Kelekian established very early in his professional career of mounting exhibitions in large and well-established museums was to continue until his death. In 1907 he exhibited a textile and rug collection at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris,²⁷ and in a letter to the noted collector Louisine Havemeyer of 16 February 1910, he expressed the hope that she and her son, Horace, would go to London to see his collection of pottery on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum. He tells her that he sent

them to that institution “to encourage in the public a love of these beautiful things and not in the least with any commercial purpose.” This exhibition was to remain on view at that museum for more than forty years—until after Kelekian’s death in 1951. Apparently this “antiquarian” succeeded commendably in his goal of encouraging others to admire Islamic objects. In fact, although he was to sell such objects directly to the Metropolitan over the years, it was in his role as tastemaker that he proved to be even more important for the young institution.

THE SECOND GROUP in whose hands most of the expertise was concentrated during this period was that of collectors. In connection with the first sixty years of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, several names in this category come immediately to mind: Edward C. Moore (1827–91), James F. Ballard (1851–1931), and Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer (Henry Osborne, 1847–1907, and Louisine, 1855–1929). These collectors were all extremely generous benefactors of the museum, donating or bequeathing large numbers of objects of the highest quality. Yet each of them gravitated, for the most part, to different media and thus enriched diverse areas of the Islamic collection; and their patterns of collecting illustrate three disparate approaches—Moore being the “artist-collector,” Ballard the “adventurer-collector,” and the Havemeyers epitomizing the great collectors of the time who relied upon the advice of one or more important dealers whom they trusted. For all of these reasons, this section of the essay is devoted to them.

One of the largest and most notable collections of Islamic objects ever to come to the museum was that belonging to Edward C. Moore, who at the time of his death in 1891 was considered the most important silversmith in the United States, perhaps in the world (fig. 8). A New Yorker by birth, Moore learned his art from his father John Chandler Moore, who began producing silverware in 1827. Not long before John retired in 1851 to be succeeded by his son, the firm of Tiffany contracted with the Moores to manufacture high-quality silver solely for them. Needless to say, this contract placed an already highly successful but presumably relatively small business on an even firmer footing, and Edward was soon



FIG. 6. *Underglaze-painted dish, northwest Iran, early seventeenth century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection, Bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher, 1917 (17.120.56). (Part of the Kelekian Collection in 1909, this dish could have been one of the "lovely Persiau potteries" brought by the men in fig. 5.)*



FIG. 7. *View of Islamic Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1912. Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives. (A number of the ceramic objects in the two cases are the same type as that in fig. 6.)*



FIG. 8. *Unknown artist, Portrait of Edward C. Moore still hanging in the Tiffany & Co. board room. Copyright Tiffany & Co. Archives 1999. (To Moore's right can be seen the pair of doors inlaid with carved ivory polygons from fourteenth-century Egypt that were part of his bequest to the Metropolitan, 91.1.2064).*

greatly to expand his operation. Located at 53 Prince Street in New York City, the factory grew in less than ten years to encompass an entire block and to employ five hundred men.

It goes without saying that since Edward Moore's silver business was thriving, so was Tiffany's. Founded by Charles L. Tiffany in 1837 as a store for stationery and household items, it was incorporated in 1868, and in that year it bought Moore's business for \$55,000.00 (\$690,000.00 in today's economy), with Edward as head of the silver department and an officer of the corporation. At the time of this sale, he also received sixty-one shares of Tiffany, each worth \$1,000.00.²⁸

From contemporary accounts it is clear that Moore was a very private individual who was not easy to know: "modest and retiring, almost morbidly averse to publicity of any kind, he passed through life without assuming in the eyes of the general pub-

lic the credit he so well deserved . . . the world will never fully know the loss it met with in the death of Mr. Moore, and what he did for the industrial arts will never be wholly told."²⁹

Thus, it is not surprising that so little is known about his collecting habits. In answer to a letter of 24 March 1908 from the Met's director as to where his father had acquired the objects in his collection, Edward C. Moore, Jr., states that he cannot shed much light on this subject himself. He was, however, able to list a number of important collections, such as those of Charles H. A. Schéfer and Albert Goupil, that were sold in Paris during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as well as several commercial establishments from which his father acquired objects. From his son's answer, it appears that in addition to the large auctions and private dealers (almost all of whom were to be found in Europe at this time) Edward C. Moore also bought "'Persian' faience . . . directly from 'Persia,'" and some of his "Oriental metalwork came from 'Persia'" as well.³⁰ Whether he traveled to the Middle East or the objects referred to as coming from there were bought in Europe is now impossible to ascertain.

What is very clear and important to note, however, is that most of his collection was acquired to serve as inspiration for the designs generated by him as well as his employees and apprentices. Neatly calligraphed notebooks remain containing pages with the heading "Bought for Patterns" on which each numbered item is succinctly described and the purchase price given.³¹ Several of his patterns inspired by those found on Islamic objects are known. A design patent was issued to him and assigned to Tiffany & Company on 15 October 1872 for a flatware design called "Persian." Also called by the same name in the ledgers was a tea set manufactured about 1888 now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.³² The "pride of his life" seems to have been his hollowware known as "Saracenic." This must have been a generic classification rather than the name of a specific pattern as it does not appear in the ledgers.³³ Several pieces of his "Saracenic" ware were displayed in the Paris Exposition of 1889. For this he was given the title Chevalier and awarded the Legion of Honor. He also adapted Islamic objects to late nineteenth-century Western needs—for instance, his grape shears, which bear close comparison with Ottoman scissors.³⁴

An article in *The New York Times* of 29 November 1891 indicates that Moore's collection, valued at \$100,000.00 (\$1,890,000.00 in today's economy), was left to his family with instructions that they were to designate the museum or art association to which it should be given. They presented it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, together with his library of industrial art books, with no conditions except that it "should be made as freely accessible as possible to the public, and especially to workmen in the industrial arts."³⁵ The importance of this bequest was clear from the moment the objects were put on view. An article in *The Sun* of 3 May 1892 judged that "the museum already had the finest collection of antique wares in the world and this collection, though not especially large, placed the Metropolitan Museum easily beyond comparison with any other." *The New York Times* on the same day commented that

the new wing of the Metropolitan Museum of the Fine Arts is not yet finished, but the solemn function which follows the usual Spring cleaning up took place last night all the same. The last reopening of the museum had comparatively little to show in the way of novelties. But this time the crowds of invited guests were more fortunate and had something to talk about. At least three collections of some magnitude have fallen to the museum of late. . . . The Moore Collection takes high rank.

Among the approximately 1,500 objects in the bequest, "perhaps the gem of the collection is in the cabinet of early Persian and Arab enameled glass. It is a famous cup of slightly tinted buff glass, decorated in gold and blue and white enamel, with badges and an intricate pattern of conventionalized hounds, and an Arab distich in colored enamel" (fig. 9).³⁶ According to the aforementioned letter from Edward C. Moore, Jr., as well as to the just-quoted article that was written at the time of his father's death, this "vase" came from the Schéfer Collection, formed by Charles Henri Auguste Schéfer (1820–98), who was the administrator of l'Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes in Paris.³⁷ This object (actually a tazza), with its virtual bestiary of both real and fantastic animals, entertainers, geometric designs, arabesques (three of



FIG. 9. Mold-blown, tooled, enamel-painted, and gilded tazza, eastern Mediterranean, first half of thirteenth century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.1538).

which end in human heads), and a secular inscription, is still one of the most extraordinary in the Metropolitan's Islamic collection. It was heralded as a superb and exceedingly rare example of Ayyubid gilded and enameled glass in my monograph on Islamic glass. The latter work included three vessels from Moore's collection of nineteenth-century Persian glass (fig. 10), and another of his world-renowned gifts—a unique Mamluk mosque lamp—graced the cover.³⁸ In fact, of the approximately 580 glass objects in the Islamic collection today, 96 came with the Edward C. Moore bequest.³⁹

Given Moore's profession, it is hardly surprising that metalwork formed a large percentage of his collection and that the "prince of silversmiths" would have surrounded himself with the best. In fact, some of the very finest inlaid copper alloy objects produced in the central and eastern Islamic lands between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries and surviving to this

FIG. 10. *View of Islamic Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1918. Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives. (A number of the nineteenth-century glass vessels from Iran seen in the two cases in the foreground were part of the Edward C. Moore bequest.)*



FIG. 11. *Copper alloy brazier inlaid with silver, Egypt, second half of thirteenth century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.540).*



day are among those he bequeathed to the Metropolitan more than a century ago (fig. 11). He was intrigued by the color effects of these medieval masterpieces, their intricate designs minutely inlaid with gold, silver, and copper; his own work, as well as that of his

seum 126 carpets valued at \$440,950.00 (or \$4,400,000.00 in today's economy).⁴⁰ Not long before this gift was made, the Metropolitan Museum of Art had mounted an exhibition of sixty-nine of Ballard's carpets. One can only surmise that the collector's pleasure at seeing his treasures so treated must have been a factor in his generosity toward the



FIG. 12. *James F. Ballard. Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.*

museum. He was particularly proud of his Ottoman court manufactory rugs, which were purported to be the most valuable of that category in existence. One of these (fig. 13) he pursued for eighteen years and finally succeeded in acquiring from a New York dealer for \$15,000.00 (\$150,000.00 in today's economy).

A resident of St. Louis, Missouri, Ballard stated in a letter to the Metropolitan of 8 April 1922 that he wanted his rugs to go to the American museum where they would be seen by the greatest number of people, and he felt that the Met was the only place that could happen. His correspondence with the Metropolitan also indicates that he wanted the New York museum to have the greatest collection of rugs in the world, and to that end, before making his final selection, he asked for a list of rugs already owned by the museum so that he could fill the gaps and thus make the Metropolitan's holdings the most complete and comprehensive. The museum's rug collection, numbering only six carpets of first-rate importance in 1910, was augmented in the twelve years before Ballard's

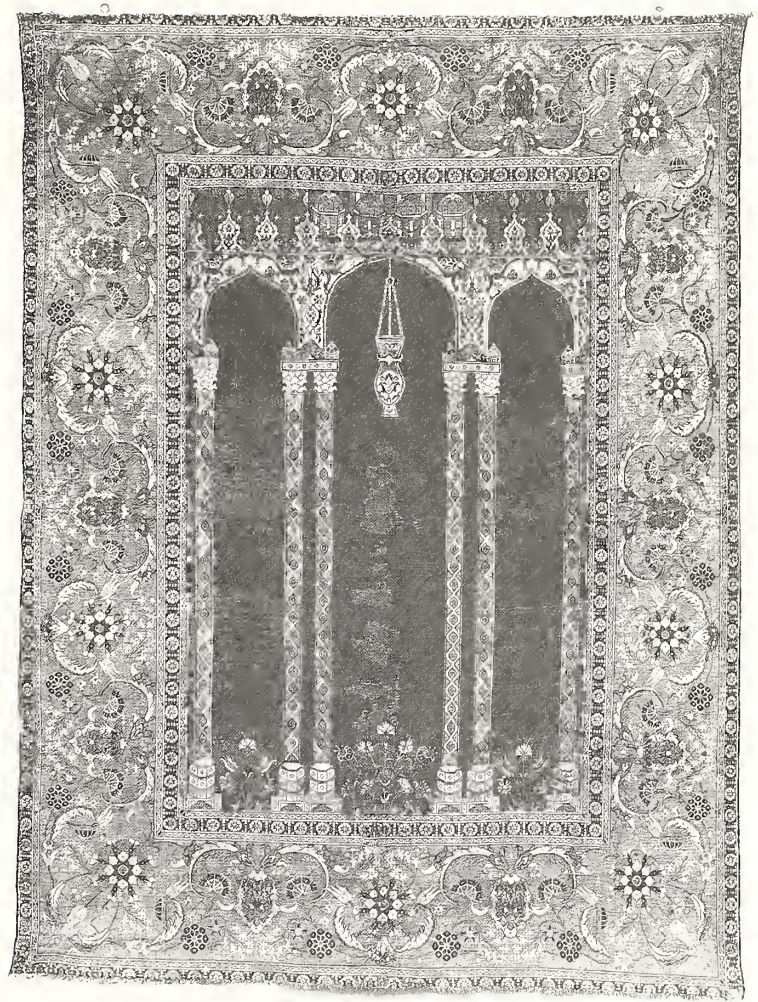


FIG. 13. *Silk, wool, and cotton prayer carpet, Turkey (probably Bursa), late sixteenth century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, The James F. Ballard Collection, Gift of James F. Ballard, 1922 (22.100.51).*

gift by those of the J. P. Morgan Collection and the Altman and Fletcher bequests (fig. 14). Ballard's beneficence, however, immediately catapulted the museum's carpet collection to world-class rank. Amazingly, this "adventurer-collector's" gift, made more than seventy-five years ago, comprises more than a quarter of the Metropolitan's total rug holdings today (about 126 out of 441).

Ballard bought his first rug in New York City in 1905 and was fond of relating the story of its purchase. While walking along Fourth Avenue (now Park Avenue South) during a break in his business appointments, he was drawn to a small rug he saw in a shop window and asked the shopkeeper its price.

FIG. 14. *View of Islamic Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1921. Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives. (The carpets seen here were among those in the collection before the Ballard gift.)*



When he was told it was \$500.00 (\$9,275.00 in today's economy), he dismissed the rug from his mind, declaring the price "ridiculous" since in his opinion rugs should cost only fifteen or twenty dollars. Haunted, however, by the rug's beauty and unable to sleep that night, he acquired it the next day. From then until his death in 1931, the pursuit of the best examples of the art of weaving became his passion. Retiring from the business that had made him a fortune, the manufacture and wholesaling of drugs and chemicals, this man with an elementary school education was to travel more than half a million miles in his search for the choicest and rarest examples of the weaver's art. Ballard personally gathered all of his rugs rather than delegating the hard work to agents and trusting the judgment of hired experts. He seems to have enjoyed immensely the chase and the capture.

One of Ballard's favorite adventures took place

in Syria. Having reached a stalemate with a rug dealer over the price of one of his objects, he was about to leave the shop when he noticed the man's mangy dog wearing a blanket made from a dirty carpet. The American asked if he could buy the dog, as is, at the dealer's price—no bargaining! The shocked shopkeeper named his price; Ballard paid it, picked up the dog, and left. Once outside, he removed the blanket and gave the dog to the first young boy he met. The astute collector had recognized the dirty blanket as a carpet—an example of "one of the Orient's rarest weaves."⁴¹

A second tale he delighted in telling concerned his so-called Bird Rug, now in the Metropolitan (fig. 15). Ballard had long dreamt of discovering a rug of this type, but this dream had eluded him during more than fifteen years of collecting. In 1921, however, he decided to make one more international foray in

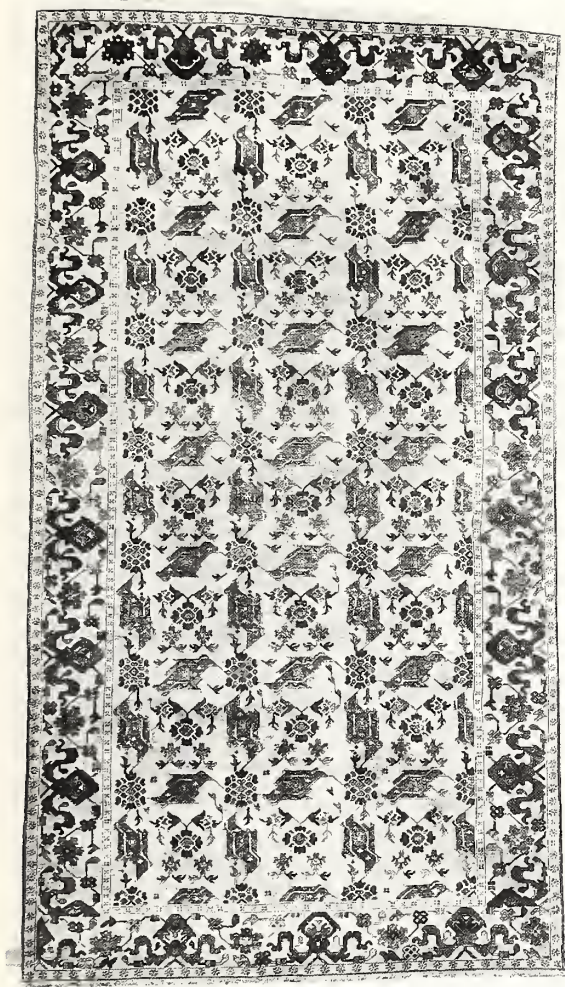


FIG. 15. Wool "Bird rug," Turkey (probably Ushak), late sixteenth century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, The James F. Ballard Collection, Gift of James F. Ballard, 1922 (22.100.127).

search of such a treasure. When the dealers of London and Paris could not help him, he boarded a train traveling from Paris to the Balkan peninsula. He and his traveling companion were removed from the train in the middle of the night at bayonet point and taken as prisoners of war. (They were in the midst of an armed struggle between the Greeks and the Turks, and all foreigners crossing the border were being apprehended.) The young officer in charge took a liking to Ballard, found a place where the two might spend the night (two chairs on a veranda), and the next morning took them to his headquarters in Adrianople (modern Edirne). At their arraignment,

the young officer gave such a favorable report of his prisoners that his superior decided not to incarcerate them. Furthermore, he suggested that the young officer should escort them around the city. Ballard seized this golden opportunity and told their guide about his so-far unsuccessful search for an example of the famous "bird rugs." The young officer rose to the challenge, exclaiming that if such a rug were to be found in the city, they would find it. After visiting many rug shops, they entered a final one and asked the dealer to show them his oldest rug. When this rug was produced and unfolded, it turned out to be what Ballard had long sought. Now he had to get his treasure out of the war-torn area, a matter complicated by the fact that he had to sail from Smyrna (modern Izmir), which at this time was still under Greek control. When the ship lifted anchor, however, Ballard as well as his precious cargo were on board; and the collection he was to give to the Metropolitan Museum of Art a year later was more comprehensive because of this adventure!⁴²

As to the important role played by the H. O. Havemeyers in the Met's extensive holdings from the Muslim world, their pattern of collecting Islamic art was unlike that of either the "artist-collector" or the "adventurer-collector," for Harry and Louisine epitomized the great collectors of the time who relied upon the advice of important dealers in whose judgment they had great confidence. Furthermore, their close association with several artists who collected such art themselves and whose work was strongly influenced by it seems to have played a key role in laying the foundation for their own later interest in such objects.⁴³

One or both of the Havemeyers were acquainted with Edward C. Moore, at least at the time of their marriage in 1883. For that occasion, Havemeyer commissioned Moore to design a special flatware service for his bride. It has been assumed that the famous silversmith shared with the couple his enthusiasm for Islamic metalwork and glass as well as Persian and Spanish pottery and thus helped spark their interest in objects produced in the Muslim world. This interest was ultimately to result in a collection comprised of about 560 Islamic objects and carpets.

Louis Comfort Tiffany also must have helped interest them in this area, for not only did his collection include objects from the Near East, such as pottery

FIG. 16. *The Havemeyer party and Dikran Kelekian in Giza, Egypt, 1906.*



and tiles, but his interior designs utilized a broad range of motifs borrowed from the world of Islam as well as from India and the Far East. His debt to Near Eastern art and architecture was evident in his father's house at 72nd Street and Madison Avenue, particularly in the apartment he designed for himself on the top two floors, as well as in the ten houses completed in Islip in 1901, the "Moorish-inspired" designs of which he suggested. When the interiors of the Havemeyers' new home at 1 East 66th Street—designed by Tiffany and the landscape artist Samuel Colman—were completed in 1892, the dining room was the setting for their collection of so-called Hispano-Moresque luster-painted pottery and Islamic ceramics in general—some of it forming a decorative frieze encircling the room similar to that in Tiffany's own dining room. It was with Colman that H. O. Havemeyer visited the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. In addition to purchasing a number of Japanese objects—the earliest documentation we have of his interest in any kind of art—he was undoubtedly also taken to the three pavilions erected by Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey.

Both of the Havemeyers attended the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. As al-

readily mentioned, this fair was the first stop for Dikran Kelekian in the United States, and it is probably here that he and the Havemeyers met for the first time through their mutual friend Mary Cassatt. Not only was Cassatt responsible for introducing the Havemeyers to Kelekian, but this American painter was very helpful in sustaining the relationship through her frequent correspondence with her friend Louisine Havemeyer. This correspondence kept the collectors abreast of Kelekian's Paris inventory as well as his new acquisitions. The couple's associations with Cassatt as well as with Moore, Tiffany, and Colman and the advice proffered by these artists were greatly to influence their collecting decisions.

The relationship between Kelekian and the Havemeyers was to last for as long as Harry and Louisine lived. In a personal testament to her late husband, written in a letter of 16 February 1910 to Mrs. Havemeyer, Kelekian called him "the ablest and most intelligent collector [he] ever knew. His nobility of character served him well in matters where weaker people lose their way," and, according to Kelekian, Havemeyer was one of the first to understand and support Islamic art.

Although the couple's first forays into collecting



FIG. 17. Cobalt blue glazed molded jar, Iran, dated 681 A.H./A.D. 1282–83. Metropolitan Museum of Art, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Horace Havemeyer, 1956 (56.185.3).

Islamic pottery were presumably in the area of so-called Hispano-Moresque luster-painted ware, they were soon to develop a great interest in the ceramic production of Syria as well as an appreciation for Persian pottery, both areas of collecting that Louisine was to continue to pursue after her husband's death. Although they bought some of their pottery at auction, a great many of their ceramics seem to have come from Kelekian—from his Paris gallery at 2 place Vendôme. One of their largest single purchases of Islamic ceramics occurred there in late April 1906, when Mr. Havemeyer bought 57 pieces of "Near Eastern glazed earthenware" and 7 "Islamic bronzes." Kelekian had accompanied the Havemeyers and their daughter, Electra, during their visit to Egypt (fig. 16) earlier in the same trip. Such an excursion, which shows the multifaceted nature of their relationship, would certainly have further whetted the collectors' appetite for objects from the Near East.

The importance of this association with Kelekian,

which began in 1893, is mentioned in a letter to the editor in the *American Art News* that attempts to correct an earlier article on the death of Harry Havemeyer by discussing the richness and beauty of his collection of Islamic pottery and the important part played by Kelekian in securing his treasures of "Persian and Babylonian wares." According to this letter, "when the excavations were first made at Sultanabad [in the Iranian province of Jibal], the entire find of iridescent potteries was secured by Dikran Khan Kelekian. . . . Of these, the most important pieces were secured by Mr. Havemeyer."⁴⁴ One of the finds from Sultanabad was probably the large cobalt blue glazed jar (fig. 17) bought from Kelekian by H. O. Havemeyer near the end of his life. A particularly fine example of the art of the Persian potter, it is dated 681 A.H./A.D. 1282–83, and its cursive inscription exclaims, "the heavens and earth are in turmoil: how lucky are those who drink and forget"—a vivid reflection of the extreme unrest the country must have undergone after the arrival of the Mongol Ilkhanids earlier in the thirteenth century. It is interesting to note in connection with this object that Mrs. Havemeyer, who viewed Charles Lang Freer as a competitor in the collection of Islamic pottery, once compared their jar unfavorably with a similar one bought in 1908 by Freer from another source. Kelekian, in a letter to Mary Cassatt, responded that Mrs. Havemeyer was incorrect in her judgment as the one belonging to the Havemeyers was much better. Although it is not known what was paid for this large storage jar, such rare objects must have been in great demand at the time, for in 1910 Kelekian was asking \$50,000.00 (\$930,000.00 in today's economy) for another cobalt blue molded storage jar in his collection.⁴⁵

The Havemeyer's son, Horace, was also enthusiastic about collecting medieval Syrian and Persian ceramics. Proof that this passion was fostered by his mother is to be found on one of the large monochrome carved turquoise Syrian vases in the Metropolitan's collection bearing a sticker with the following information: "I give this jar to Horace as a wedding present Feb. 1911 L. W. Havemeyer." It must be assumed that the type was very highly revered at this time as this object, in less than perfect condition, was given to celebrate a very special event.⁴⁶ Another vessel in the collection—this one



FIG. 18. *Underglaze- and luster-painted vessel, Syria, late twelfth–first half of thirteenth century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Horace Havemeyer, 1948 (48.113.10).*

underglaze-painted—bears the notation: “To Horace from Mother/Xmas 1916.” This object was acquired at a sale of the collection of Thomas B. Clarke on 6 January 1917 for \$690.00 (\$10,500.00 in today’s economy). As the auction occurred after Christmas, Mrs. Havemeyer may have told her son prior to the sale that she would buy him this object or a Syrian ceramic object of his choice for Christmas at that auction. At least three other objects in this sale (which contained an astounding eighty-four Syrian ceramic objects) became part of the Havemeyer collection, including the vessel in figure 18, which was acquired for \$2,100.00 (\$32,000.00 in today’s economy). The consignor of these objects had acquired some of them from well-known private collections that had been dispersed. Yet the introduction to the auction catalogue indicates that the sale contained “a number of Rakka pieces which are in their original coloring, wholly or mainly free from iridescence, [which] were found within one large vase or receptacle in the cellar of a house in Rakka, according to information brought by the seller to Mr. Clarke, about ten years ago, the manner of their protection accounting for the preservation of the glaze.”⁴⁷

This account of collecting the “Orient” at the Met has focused on the way in which the convergence of a particular series of events and personalities explains how and why so many superb objects from the Muslim world entered the Metropolitan Museum of Art during the first sixty years of its existence. It is hoped that this discussion has helped the reader to become better acquainted not only with some of the phenomena but also with a number of the early tastemakers who helped build the solid foundation on which today’s largest comprehensive collection of Islamic art was built. Despite the inevitable limitations of fading memories and written documents, there are still many chapters to be written in the social history of the collecting of Islamic art in America. Before all of the living sources are gone and the institutional memory (within the various museums and galleries forming this history) that is required to combine often quite disparate sources into a coherent narrative is lost, an attempt to finish this story should be made. □

Notes

1. Richard Ettinghausen, “Almost One Hundred Years Ago,” in *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, ed. R. Ettinghausen (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1972), 3.
2. For an interesting discussion of the participation of Muslim countries in the international expositions organized in both Europe and America during the second half of the nineteenth century, see Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World’s Fairs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). I am grateful to Stephen Vernoit for bringing this publication to my attention.
3. The third quarter 1999 price equivalents for the amounts quoted in this article were kindly provided by Ms. Solidelle Fortier Wasser, Senior Economist, Economic Analysis and Information Section, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.
4. *Treasures of Art, Industry and Manufacture Represented in the American Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia 1876*, ed. C. B. Norton (Buffalo, N.Y., 1877), pl. 24; and Kenneth J. Perkins, “Three Middle Eastern States Helped America Celebrate Its Centennial in Philadelphia,” *Aramco World Magazine* 27 (November–December 1976): 13.

5. Prof. Irene Bierman, Director, von Grunbaum Center for Near Eastern Studies, UCLA, lecture, The Kevorkian Center of New York University, 26 March 1999. Many of these elements must still be in the United States today and should be identifiable.
6. *Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition*, comp. John J. Flinn (Chicago: Columbian Guide Co., 1893), 113–29, 186, 230, 243, 248–49.
7. Louisiana Purchase Exposition, *Fine Art Portfolio Illustrating Some of the Exhibits of the H. Ephraim Benguiat Fine Art Museum Collection and the Historical Damascus Palace* (St. Louis, 1904), 10–23. This "Damascus Palace" had originally been part of Turkey's presentation at the Columbian World's Fair eleven years earlier, and Mr. Benguiat had traded some of the 500 rugs he exhibited in that Chicago fair for the ownership of the two rooms and the accompanying courtyard (p. 8). These might still be in the United States and, if so, should be easily identifiable. The publication directs its readers to address all communication after the close of the exposition to the Benguiat Museum either at Fifth Avenue and 34th Street in New York or at 121 avenue des Champs Élysées, Paris.
8. Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*, 93.
9. This and the Argentine building were awarded gold medals for the finest in the exposition. Arthur Upham Pope has been aptly described by S. Cary Welch in *Surveyors of Persian Art: A Documentary Biography of Arthur Upham Pope & Phyllis Ackerman*, ed. J. Gluck and N. Siver (Ashiya, Japan: SoPA, 1996), 170, as the "P.T. Barnum-figure" in the field of Islamic art.
10. Welch, *Surveyors of Persian Art*, 115–16. Dikran Kelekian was not only represented in this exhibition by his large collection of textiles, but he and Demotte lent six miniatures from the so-called Great Ilkhanid *Shāhnāma*. Louisine Havemeyer and her son, Horace, also had objects in the show, as did Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who lent so-called Polonaise carpets. Six rugs of this type were later to be given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by her husband (acc. nos. 45.106 and 50.190.1–5). Both Mrs. Havemeyer and Mrs. Rockefeller spent the day at this exhibition.
11. The first permanent professorship of Islamic Art in the United States was that held by Mehmet Aga-Oglu at the University of Michigan from 1933 to 1938. It was during his tenure there that he founded, and became the first editor of, *Ars Islamica* (vol. 1, 1934), now *Ars Orientalis*. I am grateful to Prof. Aga-Oglu's daughter, Gultekin Aga-Oglu Ludden, for kindly supplying me with the years of her father's appointment at Ann Arbor.
12. Introductory remarks to the auction catalogue of objects from his collection sold at the Fifth Avenue Art Galleries, New York, on 12–13 February 1908. I thank Dr. Dietrich von Bothmer, Distinguished Research Curator, Greek and Roman Department, Metropolitan Museum of Art, for generously sharing with me his insightful firsthand information regarding all of the dealers discussed below.
13. Introduction to the auction catalogue of objects from his father's collection sold at the Anderson Galleries, New York, on 1 December 1924.
14. *Exhibition of the Kevorkian Collection Including Objects Excavated under His Supervision* (New York: The Galleries of Charles of London, March–April 1914). The auction referred to was held on 8 and 9 January 1926 at the Anderson Galleries, New York. I thank Mr. Ralph Minasian, President, The Hagop Kevorkian Fund, for his comments on the early years of Kevorkian's career and for kindly supplying the illustration in figure 2 and allowing it to be published here. Kevorkian (1872–1962), a graduate of Roberts College in Constantinople, established a foundation to foster a better understanding of the cultures of the Near and Middle East. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has been a primary beneficiary of his and his foundation's munificence.
15. The auction referred to was held at the Anderson Galleries, New York, on 16 and 17 January 1929.
16. Wadsworth Atheneum, *Loan Exhibition of Near Eastern Art* (Hartford, Conn.: Morgan Memorial, May 1925).
17. In a letter to the Metropolitan's director, Francis Henry Taylor, dated 28 March 1947, he stated, "it is just fifty-four years today that I arrived on these shores for the first time." The personal letter quoted here and those discussed or quoted elsewhere in this article are all housed in the museum's archives. I would like to thank Barbara W. File, Associate Archivist, for her interest in and help with my project.
18. I am indebted to Nanette R. Kelekian for giving so freely of her time and her family's archival resources in helping me to compile this section on her grandfather. She has greatly contributed to making it as comprehensive as it is. Interestingly, Kelekian, Kevorkian, and Minassian were all natives of Kayseri, Turkey. To this group must be added Calouste Gulbenkian.
19. *Columbian Exposition*, 127–28.
20. For more information on this collector, see the introductory note to the catalogue of the auction of his estate on 24–26 February 1898 at the American Art Galleries, New York.
21. Kelekian has now substituted Khan for his given middle name, Garabed—a substitution already to be found in 1903. Note also at this time a shift (or at least the perception thereof) away from a personal and professional identification with Turkey. Such a shift was to become more and more pronounced so that, as mentioned above, by 1912 Kelekian had dropped his connection with Constantinople altogether.
22. David Rockefeller relates that his mother, Mrs. John D.

Rockefeller, Jr., had a room in their home called the "Persian Room," whose decoration, however, was not confined to things Persian but to objects from the Middle East in general (pers. com.). Another example of this phenomenon is found in the home of another benefactor of the Metropolitan Museum's Islamic Department, William Milne Grinnell. In his will dated 16 January 1918 he states that the more than two hundred "articles" in his bequest are in cabinets "in the room ordinarily designated 'The Persian Room' or upon the walls of that room."

23. Scholars and students in the field of Islamic art history are still sorting out a number of problems of provenance and classification created at that time (roughly between the 1930s and the 1960s).

24. The auction referred to here was held from 15 to 18 April 1903.

25. D. K. Kelekian, *The Potteries of Persia* (Paris: H. Clarke, 1909), figs. 3 (from the same series as acc. no. 30.95.25 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art), 5, 6 and 27–31, 33, and 34.

26. Kelekian, *Potteries of Persia*, 26–27.

27. On 2 May 1910, Kelekian wrote that since this 1907 exhibition in Paris he had added 150 more "pieces" and that he had just sent the entire collection (350 "pieces") to the Munich Exhibition (the watershed exhibition mounted in that city in 1910).

28. Bruce Kamerling, "Edward C. Moore: The Genius behind Tiffany Silver, Part I," *Silver* (September–October 1977), 16–20. I would like to thank two of my colleagues in the Department of American Decorative Arts, Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, Curator, and Frances Gruber Safford, Associate Curator, both of whom have devoted their careers to the study of the period covered here and were most generous not only with their time but with their research files.

29. "A Prince of Silversmiths," *The Illustrated American*, 29 August 1891.

30. See above, p. 75, for the conflation at this time of Arab, Persian, and Turkish works of art. See also Simpson's article in this volume for a reference to one of Moore's sources for Islamic art.

31. Files of the American Decorative Arts Department, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

32. Acc. no. 97.1.1–4.

33. This term may be another one of those conflated during this period with Arab, Persian, and Turkish.

34. Bruce Kamerling, "Edward C. Moore, The Genius behind Tiffany Silver, Part II," *Silver* (November–December 1977), 8–13.

35. *The Studio* (New York, 5 December 1891), 5–6. The articles appearing at the time of his death indicate that Moore had strongly felt the need for better instruction in the arts, particularly in the decorative and industrial arts. To that end, he set out to establish in his Prince Street factory the most well-equipped and up-to-date school of its kind in existence. He studied the technical schools in Paris and incorporated the French system into his own enterprise.

36. "The Edward C. Moore Collection," *The Collector* 3 (1 May 1892): 199. Once again, this quotation demonstrates a conflation of or confusion between Persian and Arab.

37. This fact is confirmed by Stephen Vernoit in "Islamic Gilded and Enamelled Glass in Nineteenth-Century Collections," in *Gilded and Enamelled Glass from the Middle East*, ed. Rachel Ward (London: British Museum, 1998), 110–11. Vernoit also points out that two copies of this tazza were executed in the second half of the nineteenth century—one by Brocard and the other by Imberton. Vernoit's information regarding the position Shéfer held at l'Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes differs from that stated in the catalogue of the auction of his objects in June 1898 at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris.

38. Marilyn Jenkins, *Islamic Glass: A Brief History*, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (Fall 1986).

39. Moore shared his love of ancient and medieval glass with Louis Comfort Tiffany, son of the founder of Tiffany & Co. With his friend's encouragement Louis collected ancient iridescent glass that was to become the inspiration for his highly famed Favrite glass.

40. In addition to the information gleaned from correspondence in the museum's archives, that presented here concerning James F. Ballard has been drawn from several newspaper articles: *New York Tribune*, 23 May 1922 and 18 November 1923; *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 June 1922; *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 April 1931 and 24 April 1931.

41. *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 April 1931. Unfortunately, it is not known which of his carpets this is.

42. Only the general outlines of this adventure have been related here. Ballard's story seems to have become somewhat confused in its retelling by several different reporters. Some of the specific details reported do not always precisely coincide with the volatile situation on the ground at that time.

43. Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, "The Forgotten Legacy: The Havemeyers' Collection of Decorative Arts" and "The Havemeyer House," in *Splendid Legacy: The Havemeyer Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993), 99–113 and 173–98, respectively. These articles give a much more detailed account of these collectors as well as their collecting and the decoration of their home than has been possible here.

44. T.B.C., "The Havemeyer Collections," *American Art News* 6 (21 December 1907).

45. For the Freer vase, cf. Esin Atil, *Ceramics from the World of Islam* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1973), no. 77, p. 169. For that in the Kelekian Collection in 1910, cf. D. K. Kelekian, *The Kelekian Collection of Persian and Analogous Potteries 1885-1910* (Paris: H. Clarke, 1910), frontispiece and no. 111. In the preface Kelekian says that "the ruins of Sultanabad and Veramin were discovered in 1905. . . . From the diggings made there have come some magnificent vases, pitchers and bowls, occasionally intact. . . . The first piece of pottery unearthed at Rakka came to light in 1896."

46. Marilyn Jenkins, "Carved Ceramics from the Arab World," in *Splendid Legacy*, 119.

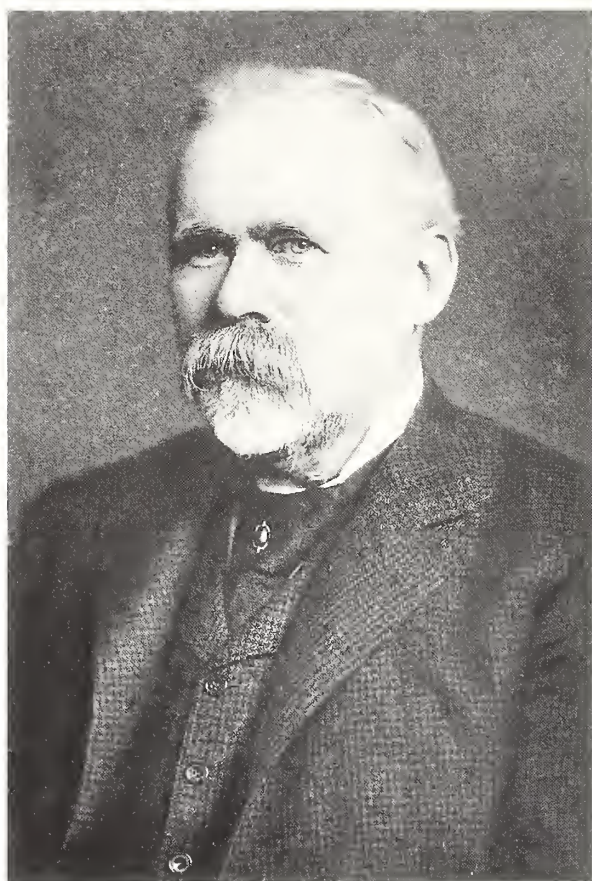
47. This quotation helps to explain the unusually good state of preservation of many of the so-called Raqqa pieces coming on the market at this time. The sale referred to here was held at the American Art Galleries, Madison Square South, New York, from 3 to 6 January 1917. In the section on pottery and tiles, the pottery from Raqqa is called "Babylonian" and dated to the tenth century. The Kouchakji Frères in the prefatory note to their auction at the Anderson Galleries, New York, on 25 and 26 January 1927 maintain that the company "has concentrated its entire resources and experience in the discovery and the bringing to America of the most important examples of Near Eastern art. . . . Rakka pottery was introduced to America by Kouchakji Frères . . . the source of supply of ancient Rakka seems more or less exhausted and all excavations have become a state monopoly. We doubt very much if any such opportunity will ever be offered again."

“A Gallant Era”:

*Henry Walters, Islamic Art,
and the Kelekian Connection*

ABSTRACT

The history of art collecting in the United States includes fascinating stories of the relations between collectors and dealers. One such account involves Henry Walters (1848–1931), who bequeathed his collection of 22,000 works of Western and Eastern art to the City of Baltimore to form the Walters Art Gallery (now called the Walters Art Museum), and the dealer Dikran G. Kelekian (1868–1951), who played a major role in the formation of Mr. Walters’s encyclopedic holdings. Kelekian was particularly influential in Walters’s acquisitions of Islamic art, including ceramics, metalwork, textiles and carpets, arms and armor, and manuscripts and miniature paintings. This article documents Henry Walters’s decades-long association with Kelekian in the context of his varying interests in and reasons for collecting the arts of the Islamic world.



THE FORMATION of the Islamic collection belonging to the Walters Art Gallery fits a familiar pattern within the history of private collecting in the United States. It involves a discriminating but not necessarily knowledgeable collector, seemingly motivated by various impulses both personal and intellectual, and an expert and persuasive art dealer eager to guide his client in the purchase of both multiple and singular objects. The two individuals involved in this particular story are Henry Walters (1848–1931) and Dikran G. Kelekian (1868–1951) (figs. 1 and 2).¹

In 1931 Henry Walters bequeathed the encyclopedic collections acquired during his lifetime and that of his father William (1819–94) to the City of Baltimore for the benefit of the public. Thus was formed the Walters Art Gallery, a public museum housed in a palazzo-style building that Mr. Walters also deeded to Baltimore as part of his magnanimous benefaction.² Among the 22,000 or so works of Western and Eastern art comprising Mr. Walters’s bequest were some 1,200 Islamic objects, covering the full expanse of Muslim history from its formative period through modern times and representing the main cultures and artistic media of the traditional Islamic world. Within the American history of collecting and exhibiting Islamic art, the creation of the Walters Art Gallery as a municipal institution charged with benefiting the public through the presentation of diverse artistic traditions, including Islamic, certainly may be considered a significant development.

Another milestone in this history occurred exactly twenty years later when, in January 1951, Dikran Kelekian plunged to his death from the twenty-first floor of the St. Moritz Hotel in New York.

Over a career that spanned six decades, this well-known dealer had played a notable role in the creation of the Islamic holdings of a number of major American museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the Freer Gallery of Art. Kelekian was also the primary instigator behind and principal source for the Islamic collection formed by Henry Walters and remained an unmistakable presence in the early life of the Walters Art Gallery as a public museum. Kelekian was on hand to help celebrate the museum’s official opening in 1934 and was affectionately known to the Walters staff at that time as “Kiki.”³

The Islamic collection at the Walters Art Gallery today remains essentially as Henry Walters bequeathed it in 1931 (fig. 3). Eighty percent of the holdings consists of arts of the object, with a predominance of under- and overglaze painted ceramics, including both vessels and tiles. The department of Islamic art also includes glass, metalwork (including silver objects that were long believed to be Sasanian and now can be reattributed to the early Islamic period), arms and armor (considered to be one of the finest collections in North America), jewelry, woodwork, ivory, lacquerware, textiles (including many tiraz fragments), and carpets. As is the case in most Islamic collections in the U.S., the majority of objects come from Iran and date from the medieval period to modern times. There are also works from Spain, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq dating from the ninth through fifteenth centuries, as well as from Ottoman Turkey and Mughal India.⁴ The Walters’s department of manuscripts and rare books also houses several dozen bound volumes of the Qurʾān plus illuminated and illustrated copies of Arab, Persian, Turkish, and Indian texts. The total number of 127 codices, many with quite fine bindings, actually makes the Walters the largest art museum collection of bound Islamic manuscripts in the United States. In addition there are close to one hundred detached manuscript folios and album paintings and drawings.⁵

Henry Walters’s acquisition of Islamic objects and manuscripts was part and parcel of his general interest in art and his collecting activities as a whole. Henry was first exposed to art as a child during the late 1850s in Baltimore, where his father William, a successful businessman, started to patronize both

FIG. 1 (TOP LEFT). *Henry Walters, ca. 1908. From Records of the Zodiac Club as They Appear in the Minute Books (New York: Privately printed, 1916). Courtesy of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.*

FIG. 2 (TOP RIGHT). *Dikran G. Kelekian, ca. 1944. Photo: Alfredo Valenti. After Kelekian as the Artist Sees Him.*

FIG. 3 (BOTTOM). *Highlights of the Islamic collection, Walters Art Gallery, fall 1999.*

local and nationally prominent American artists and to collect their work.⁶ At this same time the senior Mr. Walters also began to explore European painting, acquiring works by various emerging academic masters, including Jean-Léon Gérôme.⁷

At the onset of the Civil War, William Walters relocated his wife Ellen, daughter Jennie, and son Henry (or Harry, as he was called), then thirteen, to Paris.⁸ There the Walters family toured museums and monuments and visited artists' studios, and William carried on with his art collecting and patronage, including commissioning works from Gérôme, Honoré Daumier, and the prolific *animalier* Antoine-Louis Bayre, among others. In the fall of 1862, the Walters family traveled to London to visit the International Exhibition, where they were particularly taken with the displays of Japanese and Chinese art—an area in which William would soon start to collect and subsequently built up impressive holdings of Far Eastern ceramics, lacquerware, netsuke, and armor to match those of his burgeoning collection of contemporary European painting. Sadly, during this London sojourn Mrs. Walters caught a chill and died of pneumonia. The rest of the family stayed on in Europe for several more years, with the children in school in Paris and William occupying himself with travels on the continent and purchases of works of art, concentrating on landscapes by painters such as Rousseau, Daubigny, and Corot and on sculptures and watercolors by Bayre.

William continued his collecting activities following the family's return to Baltimore in 1865, with frequent excursions back to Europe during the later 1860s and 1870s for visits to art dealers, museum exhibitions, and international expositions.⁹ During this period Harry completed his secondary and college education and then went to work, eventually joining William in the railroad business.¹⁰ Occasionally he would accompany his father on art buying "sprees," as at the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia, where William made a particularly large number of acquisitions, primarily Japanese bronzes, lacquers, and ceramics as well as Chinese porcelains and some Egyptian, Tunisian, and Russian artifacts. Harry recorded all these purchases in a notebook, organizing the items by vendor and including details on their media, age, condition, and price and even some cursory sketches.¹¹

While such experiences were clearly formative for Henry Walters, it is hard to say when he came into his own as a collector. Few records survive of his own purchases, and precious little else by way of documentation that might reveal his collecting motivations and patterns. What is certain, however, is that while William Walters did have interests beyond the European painting and Oriental objects that he primarily collected, even extending to Islamic art,¹² the range of Henry's ambitions eventually far exceeded that of his father. Henry possessed a wider cultural and historical vision, possibly because what he was aiming for—and what he ultimately achieved—was a collection that would transcend the bounds of the private and particular and attain the realm of the public and comprehensive.

First and foremost, Henry's worldview encompassed ancient art and archaeology—areas that attracted and sustained his attention and support from fairly early on through his later years.¹³ In 1884 he joined several prominent Baltimoreans in establishing the first local chapter of the Archaeological Institute of America, and in 1897 he became one of the founding benefactors, along with J. P. Morgan, of the American Academy in Rome.¹⁴ A year later Henry Walters took the first of several Mediterranean cruises on his yacht the *Narada*, stopping in Venice and then sailing to Egypt, where he and his party shopped for antiquities at Giza.¹⁵ Unfortunately, no memoirs or receipts survive from that particular shopping expedition, but we do know one notable consequence of the trip. In 1899, at the request of the newly created Bath Commission of Baltimore, Mr. Walters paid for four public bath houses in his hometown, "citing the appalling lack of hygiene that he had encountered on his recent trip to Egypt and his dismay at learning that similar conditions prevailed at home."¹⁶ A subsequent *Narada* cruise took Walters and a group of guests to Istanbul, where he purchased several damascened sword blades and a blue-and-white Chinese porcelain bottle, dating from the Kangxi era (1662–1722) and later turned into a Near Eastern-style water pipe through the addition of gilt and jeweled mounts.¹⁷

It was also during the 1890s that Henry Walters first came into contact with Dikran Garabed Kelekian, who was to play such an important role in Henry's transformation from a casual shopper for souvenirs into

a serious collector of works of art. The son of an Armenian banker from Kayseri, Dikran Kelekian and his brother Kevork set themselves up in the antiquities business in Istanbul in 1892.¹⁸ The next year Dikran came to the United States as a commissioner for the Persian Pavilion at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.¹⁹ Evidently this initial American venture was a success, judging from Kelekian's printed invoices and statements, preserved in the Archives of the Walters Art Gallery, which proclaim "Premium awarded in Every Branch at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893."²⁰ He soon established shops in New York, Paris, London, and Cairo, where he and his brother flourished as vendors selling works of art and antiquities, and specifically "faïences, velvets, embroideries, rugs, statuettes, oriental manuscripts, Greek and Roman coins and ancient jewels."²¹ In 1900 Kelekian apparently served as a member of the jury for the Universal Exposition in Paris,²² and in 1903 he lent a number of his works to the massive Exposition des Arts Musulmans held at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Pavillon de Marsan), also in Paris.²³ The following year he participated in the 1904 St.

Louis World's Fair, mounting a large display of his wares and accompanying the display with an illustrated catalogue. Already by this time Kelekian seems to have been recognized by the shah of Iran for his efforts to promote Persian art and culture, and he had added the honorific title of Khan between his first and last names.²⁴ The title page of the St. Louis catalogue gives the dealer's name as "Dikran Khan Kelekian" and identifies him further as "Commissioner-General for Persia," while the following page features a formal photograph of Kelekian wearing a dress uniform complete with a fez, sword, and a large star-shaped medallion on his breast and another at his neck (see Jenkins-Madina, fig. 4, in this volume).²⁵ An issue of the *World's Fair Bulletin*, published several months before the exposition actually opened to the public, includes a cropped version of the same photo, with his medals even more conspicuous, and characterizes Kelekian both as Persia's commissioner-general and as the consul of Persia in America. "He came to St. Louis by special edict of the Shah of Persia to arrange for a display of the industries and manufactures of his [*sic*] country. . . . Commissioner Kelekian was

PREMIUM AWARDED IN EVERY BRANCH AT THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, CHICAGO, 1893

New York, May 8th 1897

Mr H Walters

Bought of **Dikran G. Kelekian**

OBJETS D'ART AND ANTIQUITIES

FAÏENCES, VELVETS, EMBROIDERIES, RUGS,
STATUETTES, ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS, GREEK
AND ROMAN COINS AND ANCIENT JEWELS * *

390 FIFTH AVENUE, COR. 36TH STREET
PARIS CONSTANTINOPE

1	Koran Cufic	500 00 =
6	msb.	250 00 =
1	Scutari velvet	35 00
		785 00

Received payment May 8th 1897
D G Kelekian - J

FIG. 4. Invoice from Dikran Kelekian to Henry Walters, 8 May 1897.

FIG. 5. Invoice
from Dikran
Kelekian to
Henry
Walters, 1
October 1897.

		PREMIUM AWARDED IN EVERY BRANCH AT THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, CHICAGO, 1893	
		New York, <u>October 1st</u> 1897	
		<u>Mr H. Walters</u>	
		Bought of Dikran G. Kelekian	
		OBJETS D'ART AND ANTIQUITIES	
FAIENCES, VELVETS, EMBROIDERIES, RUGS, STATUETTES, ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS, GREEK AND ROMAN COINS AND ANCIENT JEWELS		390 FIFTH AVENUE, COR. 36TH STREET PARIS CONSTANTINOPLE	
	1	Gard ring B.C.	125 00
	1	Agate box Louis XIV	125 00
	1	Lot of intaglios Greco-Roman	225 00
	1	Greek spoon B.C.	20 00
	1	Byzantine Icon	20 00
	1	Bronze statuette founder (Konia)	300 00
	2	Persian MSS.	200 00
	1	Louis XIV enamel case	125 00
	1	Dervish alms receiver	75 00
	1	Persian knife ivory handle	75 00
	1	" pen box "	85 00
2759	1	" velvet 16 th cent.	88 00
2750	1	Genoise velvet	158 00
2782	1	Persian brocade	60 00
	1	" silk rug 16 th century	1000 00
	1	Damascus cushion	44 00
	2	Egyptian statuettes	100 00
2784	1	Damascus cushion	65 00
2783	1	" "	65 00
2780	1	Louis XIV brocade	135 00
2779	1	Damascus cushion	58 00
	1	Persian knife	25 00
	1	" " ivory	65 00
2721	1	Koran with silver case	100 00
1527	1	Ivory pen sharpener	8 00
1878	1	Jade piece	8 00
		Ivory handle	5 00
		Persian atlas MSS.	25 00
		Turkish embroidery	600 00
		" bracelet	7 00
	3	Pieces of ecclesiastical emb, Greek	1200 00
		Geography	75 00
		Sapphire ring	65 00
		Staff MSS.	150 00
		Gold ring Greek B.C.	25 00
			5516 00



FIG. 6. *Qurʾān*, northern India (?), fifteenth century. Walters Art Gallery, MS W.563, folios 137b–138a.

one of the judges of award on Persian art at the Paris Exposition, and for that reason does not desire to enter into competition for awards with other Oriental exhibitors. Many medals were awarded him at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago.²⁶ Eventually Kelekian became an American citizen, adding another country of allegiance to those of his heritage (Armenia), his birth (Turkey), and his professional interests and recognition (Iran).²⁷

The 1904 catalogue was one of a number of works that Kelekian published in the early part of the century on aspects of Islamic and Far Eastern art.²⁸ Although some of these volumes are presented as monographic studies, with scholarly introductions and substantive texts, they all feature objects—primarily textiles, rugs, and ceramics—in Kelekian's own possession and undoubtedly were intended to attract potential customers in Europe and the United States. Henry Walters certainly was among Kelekian's earliest American customers; the two are reported to have met at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, where Kelekian sold Walters a group of Mesopotamian cylinder seals.²⁹ This purchase of a large number of small antiquities

seems to have been entirely consistent with the thrust of Walters's acquisitions up to that point and gives credence to the supposition that it was his involvement with ancient—including Egyptian, Near Eastern, Greek, and Roman—art and culture that laid the groundwork for his subsequent interest in Islamic art.

Within a few years Walters started to frequent Kelekian's New York establishment on Fifth Avenue and immediately began to broaden the areas of his collecting and to step up the pace of his buying. A series of surviving invoices from April, May, October, and November 1897 lists several hundred items representing a truly eclectic range of purchases from Louis XIV brocades to Greek intaglios (figs. 4 and 5). These invoices also document what probably were among Walters's first acquisitions of Islamic art, including manuscripts, textiles, tiles, ivories, knives, and scissors that are mostly described in very general terms: one Persian velvet, one ivory Turkish pen rest, one Arabic manuscript, and so forth.³⁰

Nowadays it is almost impossible to match the objects listed on these 1897 invoices with catalogued works in the Walters Art Gallery, but a few of



FIG. 7. Tile with the Great Mosque of Mecca, Turkey (Iznik), seventeenth century, underglaze-painted fritware. Walters Art Gallery, 48.1307.

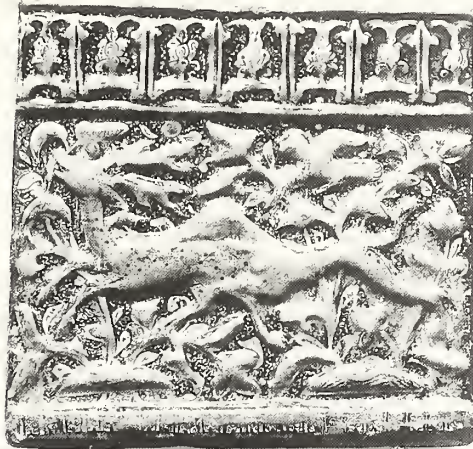
Walters's early Islamic purchases from Kelekian do stand out. These include a magnificent copy of the Qur^{ān}, long attributed to Timurid Iran but much more likely to be from fifteenth-century India on the basis of the style and palette of its lavish illumination (fig. 6).³¹ Walters paid Kelekian \$2,750 for the Qur^{ān}, an astronomical amount compared to what he was charged by Kelekian for other works in 1897. More significantly, with this acquisition Walters placed himself—consciously or not—in the vanguard of American collectors of Islamic manuscripts and distinguished himself within that company by “his focus on the artistic rather than the textual aspects of manuscripts.”³² Kelekian accompanied the Qur^{ān} with a note declaring it to be “the handsomest and

most richly illuminated in the world having explanatory footnotes, probably the work of the best writer Yakood, taken from the Royal Bibliothèque.” Another noteworthy work that jumps out of the invoices drawn up by Kelekian in April 1897 is an Ottoman tile panel (fig. 7), of extremely fine quality and condition, depicting the Great Mosque at Mecca and inscribed with verses from the Qur^{ān} exhorting Muslims to make the pilgrimage (*sūra* 3: 96–97).³³ Once again, Kelekian provided a commentary—which, like the note that accompanied the Qur^{ān}, comprises more fiction than fact: “Damascus tile of the fifteenth-century, having an inscription in early Arabic: ‘This is the first temple stone that was put in Mecca, anyone who visits this magnificent place can see the wonders of God and become holy.’” Kelekian continues with information about the provenance, far more specific and today far more disconcerting than what he mentioned about the Qur^{ān}: “This was taken from the Kiosk Hirkai Sherif or Sacred Coat where the Bird [*sic*] of Mohamed is supposed to be, and where every Sultan has to pay a visit once a year.” The Kiosk must refer to the Hirk-i Saadet Dairesi, or Pavilion of the Holy Mantle, in what was then still the Topkapi Sarayi Palace (now Museum) in Istanbul. Kelekian presumably shared this information with Walters to impress his client with the plaque's value (although he only charged Walters \$125 for it), but it is interesting that the dealer apparently had no qualms about revealing its previous (or at least its alleged previous) whereabouts.

The significance of these two acquisitions notwithstanding, the surviving invoices for purchases made by Walters from Kelekian in 1897 confirm that Walters did not give greater weight to works of Islamic art than to classical, medieval, or Renaissance art. Indeed, it is tempting to imagine Walters coming into Kelekian's Fifth Avenue shop searching for antiquities and emerging a few hours later having been persuaded by Kelekian to buy not only Greek intaglios but also a few other things from the general Mediterranean koine and points east that happened to date from the Islamic era. On the whole, it was the region—rather than the culture—that seems to have been of paramount concern to Walters.

That Henry Walters's primary interest remained the ancient and classical world was confirmed when

71



2 tiles with carvings
of
13th century
Hittite

FIG. 8. Page from a photo album prepared by Dikran Kelekian for Henry Walters, dated summer 1913–1917.

Dikran Kelekian represented his client in a major sale of antiquities from the W. H. Forman collection held at Sotheby's, London, in June 1899. Acting on Walters's behalf, the dealer bought three Egyptian objects, as well as eleven Etruscan, Greco-Roman, and Roman bronze statuettes.³⁴

That same month Kelekian also bid for Walters at another significant London sale, that of the collection of ancient and Renaissance carved and engraved gems owned by George Spencer, duke of Marlborough.

Although Walters later regretted not having attended the auction in person, his agent Kelekian, whom he regarded as a "quasi-expert" on gems, did succeed in buying 107 gems for prices ranging from 10 to 45 pounds.³⁵ Some of these pieces had great beauty and historical importance, such as a sixteenth-century lapis lazuli cameo showing Hercules and Omphale.³⁶

Walters's passion for gems—and indeed for small-scale works of diverse kinds—provides yet another context in which to understand his Islamic purchases.



FIG. 9. Pound weight, Syria (Damascus), dated 126 A.H./A.D. 743, glass. Walters Art Gallery, 47.6.

As William Johnston so aptly observes in his comprehensive study of Henry's collecting: "Undoubtedly, given his tastes [for precious objects], he found the emphasis on exquisite craftsmanship and exacting detail inherent in Islamic art particularly congenial."³⁷

As Johnston also has documented, by the end of the century Walters began to take annual spring trips to Paris—a travel routine he would follow for the rest of his life.³⁸ There he made the rounds of a few antiquarians, usually beginning at Kelekian's shop, first located on the rue Rossini and later on the place Vendôme, where he also met other dealers, many of them Armenians who had recently left Istanbul for Paris. "As they showed Walters their wares, Kelekian, standing nearby, would nod to Mr. Walters signifying his approval or disapproval of potential purchases."³⁹ While confident of his own tastes and collecting instincts, Walters clearly relied on Kelekian for advice and guidance in the selection of specific objects for his ever-burgeoning collection.

Kelekian continued to be a major source of works of art for Walters during the first three decades of the new century, as evidenced by additional material in the Walters Art Gallery Archives (fig. 8). Of particu-

lar value is a set of five albums, dating from the 1910s and containing photos of works of art, that Kelekian assembled for Walters.⁴⁰ Although we cannot be sure today whether Kelekian intended the photo albums to tempt Walters with available offerings or to document what he already had sold Walters, most of the reproductions can be identified with works in the museum's collection. Many of the works are Islamic, including ceramics, glass, ivory and woodwork, metalwork, arms and armor, textiles and miniatures, in addition to ancient Egyptian wood and stone sculpture and Greek bronzes and intaglios. Kelekian identified each photo with a brief caption, generally providing the work's title, date, and place of origin and occasionally an exhibition citation. Kelekian's notations are not entirely accurate or reliable, tending, in particular, to date miniatures a century or so earlier than they actually were painted. This could have been a deliberate strategy on Kelekian's part to enhance the works' appeal to Walters's antiquarian tastes. On the other hand, Kelekian did sometimes make mistakes,



FIG. 10. Turban helmet, northwestern Iran, ca. 1450–1500, steel engraved and inlaid in silver. Walters Art Gallery, 51.70.

as in his tenth-century date for a green glass weight with a Kufic inscription (fig. 9) in the 1914 album. The dated inscription actually reveals that the one-pound (full *ratl*) weight was made during the one-year reign 126/744 of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd III under the aegis of al-Walid ibn Abd al-Rahmān, financial director of the treasury in Damascus. The year of 744 makes the weight one of the earliest dated works of Islamic art in an American collection, a distinction that Kelekian surely would have touted to Henry Walters had he known it.⁴¹

The album put together in 1911 contains seventeen pieces of arms and armor, many of which Kelekian identifies as "Saracenic, 14th century" and as originally in the "Arsenal of Constantinople." Again, as with the Qurʾān and the ceramic plaque representing the Great Mosque of Mecca that Kelekian sold to Walters in 1897, the dealer seems to have had no compunction about revealing the original source of his offerings. Occasionally he notes other owners, as with several helmets from the "d'orville collection."⁴² Two other helmets (fig. 10), documented in the album of 1913–17, have an even more intriguing provenance. In addition to mentioning that they came from the Arsenal of Constantinople, Kelekian states they were in the Gérôme collection. The by-then well-known French painter Gérôme was an inveterate traveler who took half a dozen trips to Egypt, Turkey, and the Maghrib from the 1850s to the early 1880s.⁴³ During his travels Gérôme probably acquired the two helmets that Kelekian included in his album of 1913–17. Gérôme's trips also resulted in numerous paintings of Orientalist subjects, including compositions with armed figures wearing helmets that may very well be the ones that Henry Walters subsequently acquired.⁴⁴ Part of the added appeal of these objects for Henry must have been the fact that his father William had been an admirer of Gérôme's Orientalist themes, even commissioning the artist to paint a scene of a Nubian walking two whippets in a barren wind-swept desert.⁴⁵

About half of the objects included in the Kelekian albums consist of ceramics, a percentage that corresponds to the overall proportion of ceramics to other Islamic objects that Walters bought from the dealer over the years. This concentration is hardly surprising given Kelekian's expertise in Islamic, and particu-

larly Persian, pottery and his active involvement in the sale of medieval Islamic ceramics following the sherd finds in Rayy (then called Rhages) in the late 1880s–early 1890s, as well as the excavations begun in Raqqa in 1896 and Sultanabad and Varamin in 1905.⁴⁶ Kelekian took advantage of the newly available finds to assemble his own large collection, which he used as the basis for a brief survey of Persian and Near Eastern pottery in 1909 (one of the first such introductions published in English) and a lavishly illustrated collection catalogue in 1910 (fig. 11).⁴⁷ Many familiar pieces, now in the Walters as well as other U.S. museums including the Metropolitan, the Freer, and MFA, Boston, made their first appearance in Kelekian's 1909 publication. Among Walters's possessions reproduced in the 1909 volume were an Ottoman mosque lamp (fig. 12), described by Kelekian as Rhodian and long since recognized as a fine example of Iznik ware;⁴⁸ an impressive turquoise plate dated 885 A.H./1480–81, called Koubatcha by Kelekian and now attributed to Nishapur;⁴⁹ and two Hispano-Moresque plates.⁵⁰

Kelekian wrote the texts in his two ceramic publications in a prose style bordering on the fulsome. In addition to laying out a historical chronology and artistic classification, he seems to have two principal aims: to convince the reader of the aesthetic qualities and human "relevance" of Persian art in general and pottery in particular and to validate the taste of collectors who already had been persuaded to acquire Persian art and encourage them to continue their acquisitions. Two passages, one from the 1909 survey and the other from the 1910 catalogue, may suffice to make this point.

The Persian art is nearer to the spirit of the time in which we live. It is more human than its predecessors. We understand it with the heart as well as with the intellect. Discriminating collectors who have come to know it in recent times, have grown to love it with a deep and abiding affection as something quite within the scope of their own emotional experiences.⁵¹

My object in selecting the specimens which make up my collection has been to establish the right of the Persian potteries to be regarded as one of the powerful artistic impulses of all time. No artists of

FIG. 11. *Title page of
The Kelekian
Collection of Persian
and Analogous
Potteries, with
Kelekian's dedication
to Henry Walters.*

*To Henry Walters, Esq.
with compliments of
Dikran Khan Kelekian*

THE
KELEKIAN COLLECTION
OF
PERSIAN AND ANALOGOUS
POTTERIES

1885-1910



PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

HERBERT CLARKE
338, RUE SAINT-HONORE
PARIS
1910

any epoch have so fully understood the principles of decoration and their works, the few of them which have come down to us, are a lasting monument to their skill. Persian art is Decoration in its highest interpretation. The day when it will receive its full meed of appreciation and understanding is not, I am convinced, far distant. It only remains for the beautiful potteries to be recognized as the lovely works of art they undoubtedly are, for their beauty and their charm to be felt.⁵²

Kelekian's few surviving letters contain comments in a similar vein about specific works that were either offered to or acquired by Henry Walters. On 20 May 1915 Kelekian wrote a long missive from Paris:

The fine large plate you saw in my place was discovered four years ago and caused an enormous sensation throughout Persia. The owner wanted a very big price for it. Finally I bought it last year and sent it to my brother, after bargaining for it during four years. I do not say this boastfully from a financial point of view, but simply to show you that it is for the love of these beautiful potteries that I desired to control them.

The same letter contains a reference to another piece: "I was very glad to hear news of you from my brother. He said that you had called on him [probably in New York] and that you had bought the very best luster vase that I have ever seen. Please accept my congratulations.

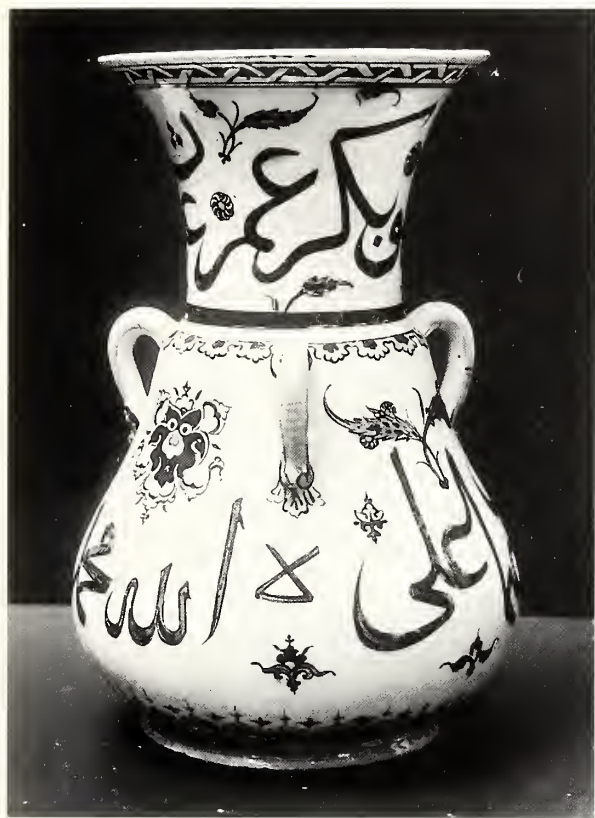


FIG. 12. *Lamp, Turkey (Iznik), mid-sixteenth century, underglaze-painted fritware. Walters Art Gallery, 48.1301.*

Your Persian collection now ranges amongst the few most noted in the world."⁵³ These blandishments were, however, coupled with admonishments, in an apparent effort to reinforce his expertise in Persian ceramics and to justify the prices he was charging Mr. Walters:

Although I have been telling you that there are no more Persian potteries to be found, you said to my brother that there were many to be had in America at very moderate prices. I am quite ready to confirm my statement which I can prove by 30 years of personal experience and by that of my brother and father before me. . . . I have studied this question most carefully and have been myself and am sending people continually to the spot of excavations to study the matter. . . . I have come to the conclusion and am quite convinced that there is practically nothing more to be found.

Kelekian goes on to caution Henry Walters that the

pieces then on the U.S. market were fragments and to imply that they were not worthy of the collector's consideration.⁵⁴

The courage of his convictions notwithstanding, Kelekian hardly could have written Walters in such an admonitory tone were it not for the long and fruitful relationship between dealer and collector. Indeed, Henry Walters continued to acquire objects of all kinds from Kelekian through the late 1910s and 1920s, as documented in a handful of invoices and notes, as well as a series of inventory lists that were made as cases of objects were unpacked in Baltimore. Among the more notable Islamic objects that Walters acquired from Kelekian in this era was a brass ewer, inlaid with silver scenes in 644/1246–47 by the "decorator" Yūnus ibn Yūsuf al-naqqāsh al-Mawsili (fig. 13).⁵⁵ As in the past, Kelekian revealed details about the work—including its former owner, scholarly significance, and competition for its purchase—



FIG. 13. *Ewer, Iraq or Syria, signed by Yūnus ibn Yūsuf al-naqqāsh al-Mawsili and dated 644 A.H./A.D. 1246–47, bronze inlaid with silver. Walters Art Gallery, 54.456.*

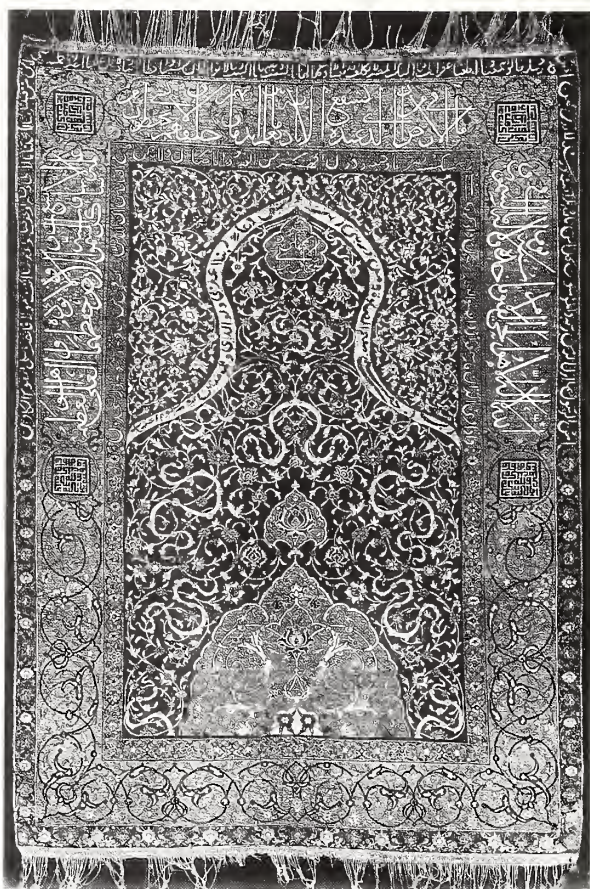


FIG. 14. Prayer rug, Iran (Kashan?), second half of sixteenth century, silk and wool. Walters Art Gallery, 81.6.

presumably in a (successful) effort to encourage Mr. Walters:

I am delighted you are interested in the great Arabic Ewer (Persian) that I bought many years ago in Constantinople from Ghazy Mahmoud Moukhtar Pasha ex-Grand Vizier who owned nearly all the inlaid bronzes bought by Baron Delore and Moore (of Tiffany) but he had kept this piece always refusing to sell it. When 25 years ago he was a great soldier he conquered all Yemen and had gathered these pieces (as his share of the loot). I bought this piece with a choice [. . .] shield. Will tell you when I shall have the pleasure to see you. This piece is absolutely the finest piece known. It is dated end of 13th century and signed. Van Berchem the great Suisse orientalist came and took the photo be-

fore the War. He wanted to publish [it], but I have no news from him since. Louvre Museum wanted often to buy [it,] but we never came to an understanding.⁵⁶

In addition to ceramics and metalwork, Kelekian had a long-time involvement with Islamic textiles. In April 1910, he acquired several fine rugs at the celebrated sale of the Charles Tyson Yerkes Collection in New York. He also may have encouraged Mr. Walters to take an interest in this sale, at which Henry purchased five carpets—actually more than any other dealer or private collector (fig. 14).⁵⁷

In one area of collecting Dikran Kelekian's persuasive powers seem to have had no effect whatsoever on Henry Walters. Sometime in the 1910s, well into his fruitful relationship with Walters, Kelekian turned his attention to modern art, particularly the work of French Impressionist and post-Impressionist painters. By 1920 he had built up an impressive collection of works by artists ranging from Cézanne to Toulouse-Lautrec, including living painters such as Bonnard, Derain, Matisse, Picasso, and Vuillard.⁵⁸ His holdings attracted the admiration of no less a critic than Roger Fry, who opined: "Here is a man whose whole life has been spent in the study of early art, who at a given moment has had the grace to see its implications, to see that principles precisely similar to those employed by early Persian potters and Fatimite [*sic*] craftsmen were being actually put into practice by men of the present generation."⁵⁹ Henry Walters obviously did not share Fry's views of the connections between contemporary artists and Islamic artisans and, even more tellingly considering that his father had been a great champion of the art of his time, did not avail himself of the opportunity to expand his collection's scope when a large selection of Kelekian's "modern pictures" was sold in New York City in January 1922.⁶⁰ Not even the fact that Kelekian himself asserted the affinity between past and present art and had received the French Legion of Honor for arranging the first exhibitions of modern art in Paris seems to have convinced Walters to venture into this field.⁶¹

This is not to say, however, that Henry Walters completely rejected the "contemporary" art and artists who had so appealed to his father. Indeed, Henry



FIG. 15. *Jean-Léon Gérôme, On the Desert, before 1867, oil on panel. Walters Art Gallery, 37.34.*

inherited all of his father's nineteenth-century (i.e., contemporary) paintings and displayed them in the Palazzo-style gallery he built on Mt. Vernon Place in Baltimore between 1904 and 1909. Among the nineteenth-century compositions amassed by William and passed along to Henry were quite a few depicting Orientalist themes, including *On the Desert*, which William commissioned from Gérôme in 1867 (fig. 15), *Collision of Moorish Horsemen* by Eugène Delacroix, *Arabs in Egypt, Sunrise* by Adolph Schreyer, *The Slipper Merchant* by the Spanish artist Villegas, and a quintessentially Orientalist work *Entering the Harem* by Georges-Jules Victor Clairin (fig. 16).⁶² Over the years Henry made his own acquisitions in the Orientalist genre, such as *Arab Fantasia* by Mariano Fortuny y Marsal, *Bashi-Bazouk Singing* by Gérôme, an enormous composition depicting the *Interior of the Mosque at Cordoba* by the American artist Edwin Lord Weeks (fig. 17), and—perhaps most celebrated and daring of all—*Odalisque* by Ingres.⁶³

That Henry Walters was exposed as a youth to works depicting—admittedly in very fanciful and romanticized modes—peoples and places in the Islamic

world and that he continued to acquire such paintings throughout his life surely must have some bearing on his collecting of actual works of Islamic art. For Henry Walters these “exotic” scenes of harems and bazaars, Moorish battles and mosque interiors offered an entree to another world, one filled not only with unusual personages and settings but with strange and beautiful objects of all kinds, including arms and armor. Thus it might have been natural—or at least not too much of a stretch—for him to want to possess the ceramics, glass, metalwork, weapons, and textiles depicted in paintings known since youth. And although Dikran Kelekian had quite different tastes when it came to contemporary European painting, he presumably would have not discouraged—and perhaps even encouraged—his longstanding client from acquiring works that evoked the world—or perhaps more accurately the mood—of Kelekian's origins and of so many of the pieces the dealer purveyed.

In short, Henry Walters collected Islamic art for several different reasons: as an extension of his fascination with the history and culture of the ancient world and classical antiquity, as a response to the



FIG. 16. *Georges-Jules Victor Clairin, Entering the Harem, 1870s, oil on canvas. Walters Art Gallery, 37.82.*

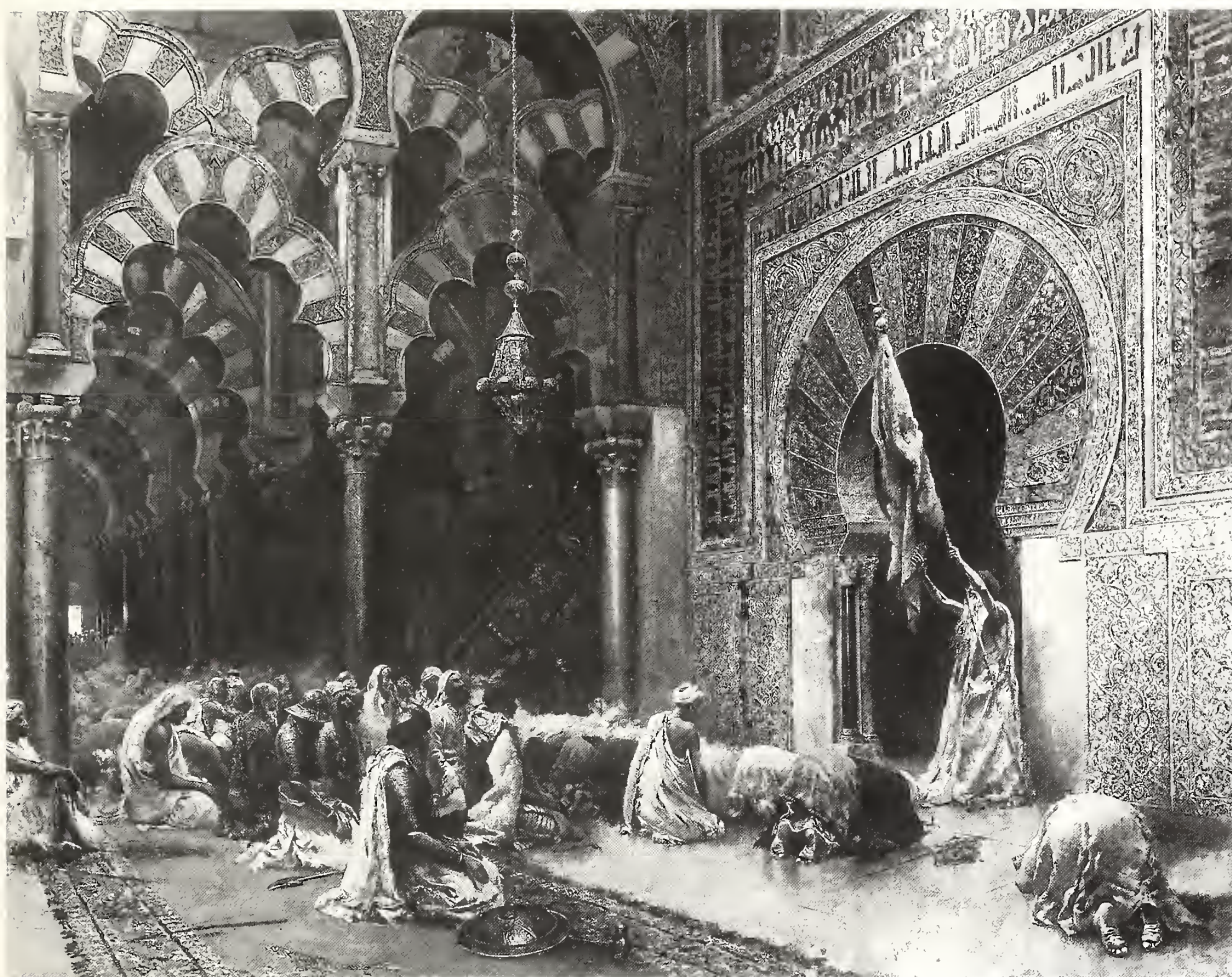


FIG. 17. *Edwin Lord Weeks, Interior of the Mosque at Cordoba, ca. 1880, oil on canvas. Walters Art Gallery, 37.169.*

aesthetic appeal of small-scale objects decorated with dense and colorful designs, and as a physical manifestation of the fantastic sights and sounds depicted in Orientalist paintings that Henry knew from childhood and experienced firsthand on occasional visits to Constantinople and Cairo.

Whatever the motivations, Dikran Kelekian was a continuous influence throughout the formation and expansion of Henry Walters's Islamic holdings and, as we have seen, had a major impact on this development.⁶⁴ That Kelekian could have been a dominant, even domineering, force is borne out by a character sketch written in the dealer's latter years: "He is a creature so curiously compounded that, under his grim and sometimes awesome visage, he combines, in one person, the qualities of a Persian satrap and a

properly accredited archangel, of Ghenghis Khan and the Chevalier Bayard, of Thor, the God of Thunder and Saint Francis of Assisi."⁶⁵ That Kelekian and Walters enjoyed instead a relationship of mutual respect and trust—in keeping with notions of conduct among gentlemen of affairs of their day—is attested much later by Dikran's son Charles, who was actively involved in the Kelekian business.⁶⁶

Mr. Walters was a quiet, most likeable and honest man—a man to whom you could do no disservice. Dikran Kelekian liked him and admired him and therefore supplied him with the best that could be found. . . . Of course, times have changed now, but I still think that collectors of his [Walters's] kind would be difficult to imagine,

even if the circumstances were closer to those prevailing at the beginning of this century. It was, indeed, a gallant era.⁶⁷ □

Notes

1. Much of what follows here depends upon research about Henry Walters and the Walters Art Gallery undertaken over many years by William R. Johnston, Associate Director and Curator of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Art. I am indebted to Bill for his interest in my work on the Islamic collection and for his generosity in answering a myriad of questions and sharing material in advance of publication (see n. 2). I also would like to acknowledge, with appreciation, the assistance of Barry Wood, Carol Bates Fellow at the Walters in 1998–99, and Michele Root, a Walters Intern in the summer of 1999, in the research on Dikran Kelekian.

2. For a detailed study of William and Henry Walters and the founding of the Walters Art Gallery, see William R. Johnston, *William and Henry Walters: The Reticent Collectors* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). A concise account, also by William R. Johnston, appears in *The Walters Art Gallery: Guide to the Collections* (London: Scala Books, 1997), 9–18.

3. Kelekian's life and career remain to be fully studied, including his dual role as a dealer and collector of such varied works as ancient Near Eastern artifacts and modern European and American paintings. Basic biographical information appears in his obituary in the *New York Times* (31 January 1951) and in a follow-up article also in the obituary section ("Bank to Administer Art Expert's Estate," *New York Times*, 3 February 1951). See also *Who Was Who in Egyptology* (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1995), 227; s.v. "Kelekian, Dikran Garabed"; and *The Dictionary of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 10:91, s.v. "Egypt, ancient, section XX, 2: Dealers." His involvement with Louisine and Henry Osborne Havemeyer, major benefactors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is discussed in Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, Gary Tinterow, et al., *Splendid Legacy: The Havemeyer Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993), 99, 105, 107–8, 110, 133, 242, 253, 255, 258, 268, 272, 274, 276. Kelekian's purchase and sale of an important group of Assyrian reliefs from the famous "Nineveh Porch" at Canford Manor, England, to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who subsequently gave them to the Metropolitan, is documented in John Malcolm Russell, *From Nineveh to New York: The Strange Story of the Metropolitan Museum's Assyrian Collection and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford Manor* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 129–52, 159, 164–65, and 197–98. See also below, nn. 18–20. Over the

years, Kelekian published various exhibition and sales catalogues. These are listed in chronological order, along with the Kelekian Collection sales held after his death, in the appendix to this article.

4. There is no published catalogue of the collection. For an overview, see *Guide to the Collections*, 99–108.

5. Several of the manuscripts are reproduced in *Guide to the Collections*, 122–25, 127. Two other important and well-known Islamic manuscripts have often been associated with the Walters: volume 1 of the Gold Qurʾān and the *Zafarnāma* made for Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bayqara. Although both these volumes were once on long-term loan to the museum and occasionally exhibited there, they actually have belonged since 1942 to Johns Hopkins University (Milton S. Eisenhower Library, John Work Garrett Collection). In February 2000 the university transferred ownership of the Gold Qurʾān to the Republic of Turkey in order to unite it with volume 2 in the Nurosmaniye Library, Istanbul.

6. William Walters achieved his initial success in the grain and liquor business, eventually shifting to banking and railroads, which were the real basis of the Walters family wealth. Alfred Jacob Miller and the sculptor William Rinehart were among the Baltimore artists patronized by Walters. Nationally recognized painters whose work Walters favored included Asher B. Durand, John Frederick Kensett, and Frederick E. Church. For William's development as an art patron and collector, see Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 12–21.

7. *Guide to the Collections*, 77; Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 17 and pl. 1.

8. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, chap. 2.

9. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, chap. 3.

10. Henry graduated from Georgetown Academy in Washington, D.C., in 1869 and attended Lawrence Scientific School in Cambridge, Mass., from 1869 through 1872. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 50–52.

11. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 73–75.

12. That William's interests were actually broader than his purchases is revealed by his visit to the 1878 Universal Exhibition in Paris, where he was attracted by works of Islamic art from private collections on view at the Galerie Orientale. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 77.

13. For an account of Henry's acquisition of Greek and Roman antiquities, see Dorothy Kent Hill, "The Classical Collection and Its Growth," *Apollo* 100 (November 1974): 6–13.

14. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 129–31, 137.

15. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 119.

16. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 128.

17. WAG 49.2199. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 121.

18. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 144, where Kelekian's father is described as a goldsmith. Russell, *From Nineveh to New York*, 136, mentions a brother named Hovannes Garabed Kelekian. Much of the history of Kelekian's business career that follows here has been pieced together from various invoices and statements of account, dated from 1897 through 1921 and preserved today in the Archives of the Walters Art Gallery, that itemize Kelekian's sales to Henry Walters. One such invoice, dated 29 December 1898, refers to the Kelekian family business as "Le Musée de Bosphore" and gives 1830 as the year of its establishment in Turkey. Through these sales documents, as well as a few surviving letters from Kelekian to Walters, it is also possible to track the location of Kelekian's various shops, especially in New York (see n. 21), and even to determine when Kelekian installed telephone service. Far more fascinating is the glimpse that these documents give of what today might be called Kelekian's self-image in the early part of his career since those of 1897 through 1909 include promotional notices, titles, and variants on the dealer's name.

19. I have not yet been able to verify either the meaning of the term "commissioner" or Kelekian's appointment as commissioner of the Persian Pavilion in Chicago in 1893.

20. Invoice dated 2 April 1897.

21. Invoice dated 8 May 1897. Kelekian's establishments changed locations regularly, judging from the addresses that appear—sometimes with handwritten corrections—on this and other Kelekian invoices. Before April 1897 the Kelekian New York shop was located at 303 (or possibly 305) Fifth Avenue. A handwritten change on an invoice of 2 April 1897 documents Kelekian's move to 390 Fifth Avenue. [Compare the 1895 date proposed for this move by Marilyn Jenkins-Madina elsewhere in this volume. It may be that Kelekian reused old letterhead or did not always handwrite a change of address—ED.] By early May 1897 Kelekian had had new forms made with the address clearly printed as "390 Fifth Avenue, cor. 36th Street." The cities of Paris and Constantinople are listed but without specific addresses. A statement dated 28 November 1898 has the 390 Fifth Avenue address crossed out and replaced with 303 Fifth Avenue, which then appears in printed form on a statement dated 29 December 1898. In June 1903, Kelekian sent Walters a statement from 10 rue Rossini, Paris; the same document gives the address of his New York shop as 252 Fifth Avenue, indicating yet another change of venue. A statement of 13 October 1906 has his New York address as 252 Fifth Avenue, near 28th Street and the Paris address as 2 place Vendôme. By 1921 Kelekian had relocated to 709 Fifth Avenue, between 55th and 56th streets, while remaining at 2 place Vendôme, Paris, with establishments also in Constantinople and Cairo.

22. Kelekian's role at the 1900 exposition is documented in an

invoice, printed in French and dated 5 June 1903, that gives his name as Dikran Khan Kelekian, followed by "Membre du Jury, Exposition Universelle de 1900." See also below, n. 26.

23. Gaston Migeon, M. van Berchem, and Cl. Huart, *Exposition des arts musulmans: Catalogue descriptif* (Paris: Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, 1903), pls. 50, 51, 87, 88, 89, and 96.

24. I have not found any independent verification of the award of the title of Khan or the honorary appointments as consul-general of Persia and commissioner-general by the then-shah of Iran, Muzaffar al-Din. On the French invoice of 5 June 1903 (see n. 22), however, the dealer adds an honorific title between his first and last names—Dikran Khan Kelekian—suggesting that the royal recognition came in that year. An invoice of 13 October 1906 adds a new adjective to his already grand title: Imperial Persian Commissioner-General. His 1951 obituary (see n. 3) states that Kelekian got the title of Khan "from the Shah of Persia for services as honorary consul general more than thirty years ago."

25. See 1904 title listed in the appendix.

26. "Persia's Participation: Dikran Khan Kelekian, Persia's Commissioner-General, Visits World Fair," *World's Fair Bulletin* 5 (February 1904): 41. The article also reveals that "Mr. Kelekian will display his private collection [containing] many fine rugs, velvets and potteries . . . which he will bring to St. Louis under bond." In truth, the *Bulletin* article sounds a bit like a personal press release.

27. Kelekian evidently became a U.S. citizen before November 1921, judging from a letter he wrote to Edward Forbes, director of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, in which he calls himself "an American" (Russell, *From Nineveh to New York*, 134). By that time, however, his original heritage seems to have gotten blurred, and he is described in a 1922 publication as a native of Persia. Seymour de Ricci, "The Kelekian Collection: A Foreword," in *Illustrated Catalogue of the Notable Collection of Modern French Pictures and a Group of Works of the Noted American Artist Arthur B. Davies Formed by and Belonging to the Widely Known Antiquarian Dikran Khan Kelekian of Paris and New York* (New York: American Art Association, 1922), n.p.

28. See the appendix for a full list of Kelekian's publications from the 1900s on.

29. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 137, 144. See also n. 39. Walters eventually amassed impressive holdings in cylinder seals, and the Walters Art Gallery long has been renowned for its strength in this area. The precise pieces that Kelekian sold to Walters in 1893 have never been identified, however, and it may be that they were no longer part of the collection when Walters died in 1931 and left his bequest to Baltimore.

30. A couple of the manuscripts are identified by their author or title. An invoice of 7 April 1897, for instance, lists "1 Gulistan Sheikh Saadi" and "one Hafiz."

31. WAG W. 563. *Guide to the Collections*, 122; Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, pl. 9.
32. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 145–46.
33. WAG 48.1307. *Guide to the Collections*, 108; Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 146.
34. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 146. See also Hill, “Classical Collection,” 8.
35. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 146–47.
36. WAG 42.1057. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 147. Hill, “Classical Collection,” 10–11, documents other classical sales in which Kelekian served as Walters’s agent.
37. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 146.
38. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 147.
39. This revealing anecdote about the Walters-Kelekian relationship was reported years later by Dikran’s son Charles D. Kelekian, who visited the Walters Art Gallery in April 1970. A staff memorandum of this visit in the museum’s archives also is the source of the information that Henry Walters first met and bought his first cylinder seal from Dikran Kelekian at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. See also Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 147.
40. Four of the albums are dated 1911, 1912, 1913–17, and 1914. The fifth is undated but is likely to be part of the same sequence.
41. WAG 47.6. Richard Ettinghausen, “An Umayyad Pound Weight,” *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 2 (1939): 73–76. Kelekian made what today is recognizable as another striking mistake in the 1912 album, identifying a twelfth-century mirror from Iran (WAG 54.520), decorated in relief with two adorsed sphinxes, as Arab from eleventh-century Baghdad.
42. WAG 51.1, 51.3, 51.72, 51.75. Kelekian also notes that two of these (WAG 51.3 and 51.75) were exhibited at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, although only 51.75 is reproduced in the exhibition catalogue (see Migeon, van Berchem, and Huart, *Exposition des arts musulmans*, cat. no. 69, right). The caption gives the collector’s name as “M. Orville,” as opposed to Kelekian’s rendition, “d’orville.”
43. Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme with a Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Sotheby’s Publication, 1986), chaps. 5–8 and 11.
44. WAG 51.70 and 51.74. Both works bear the mark of the Ottoman armory (arsenal). WAG 51.74 seems to be depicted in Gérôme’s *The Snake Charmer* (Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme*, cat. no. 282). For other possible associations between the two helmets and Gérôme’s paintings, see also cat. nos. 161, 190, 194, 211, 269.
45. WAG 37.34. William R. Johnston, *The Nineteenth-Century Paintings in the Walters Art Gallery* (Baltimore: Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery, 1982), cat. no. 109.
46. Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 146.
47. See appendix. Kelekian sent copies of both publications, today in the Walters Library, to Henry Walters, inscribed with his compliments. The works published in the 1910 volume are now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
48. WAG 48.1301. Nurhan Atasoy and Julian Raby, *Iznik* (London: Alexandria Press, 1989), no. 569; Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan Bloom, eds., *Images of Paradise in Islamic Art* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College, Hood Museum of Art, 1991), cat. no. 30a.
49. WAG 48.1031. *Guide to the Collections*, 101; Lisa Golombek, Robert B. Mason, and Gauvin A. Bailey, *Tamerlane’s Tableware: A New Approach to the Chinoiserie Ceramics of Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Iran* (Costa Mesa, Cal.: Mazda Publishers, 1996), 290 (pl. 50) and 250 (color pl. X).
50. WAG 48.1100 and 48.1300.
51. Dikran Kelekian, *The Potteries of Persia* (Paris: H. Clarke, 1909), 8–11.
52. Dikran Kelekian, *The Kelekian Collection of Persian and Analogous Potteries 1885–1910* (Paris: H. Clarke, 1910), unpaginated preface. Inasmuch as “the beautiful potteries” were part of Kelekian’s inventory as a dealer, his hyperbole here probably should be understood as a marketing or promotional tactic.
53. The luster vase may be WAG 48.1246, although there is otherwise nothing that definitely links this piece to Kelekian.
54. Notwithstanding this advice, Walters did acquire quite a number of objects, particularly mina’i, that are composed of unrelated fragments and heavily overpainted. See also Johnston, *Reticent Collectors*, 195.
55. WAG 54.456. *Guide to the Collections*, 99 and 106–7.
56. WAG Archives, letter dated 15 February 1917. The document is typed and may have been transcribed from a handwritten original, which may explain its somewhat fractured epistolary style. The parenthetical comments—including the seemingly contradictory characterization of the Yūnus ibn Yūsuf ewer as an “Arabic Ewer (Persian)”—are taken directly from the typed document. Not surprisingly, Kelekian also stressed

what Russell, *From Nineveh to New York*, 132, has aptly called the "noble pedigree" of works offered to other clients. Edward C. Moore—whom Kelekian refers to as "Moore (of Tiffany)"—was responsible for introducing Tiffany and Company's "Saracenic" line of silverware based on Islamic metalwork. I am grateful to Bill Johnston for this gloss. As Marilyn Jenkins-Madina explains elsewhere in this volume, Moore was also an avid collector and a great benefactor of the Metropolitan Museum in New York—an institution that Henry Walters also supported as a member of the Board of Trustees for many years (see Johnston, *Relicent Collectors*, 131–32, 175–76, 198).

57. Thomas J. Farnham, "The Yerkes Collection," *Itali* 101 (November 1998): 82–83, 85. As Farnham has documented (p. 83), Henry used someone other than Kelekian to bid for him at the Yerkes sale. His agent outbid the Metropolitan, exasperating Wilhelm Valentiner, who represented the New York museum. Four of Henry's five purchases belong today to the Walters Art Gallery (81.3, 81.5, 81.6, 81.7); apparently the fifth rug, originally in Henry's living room and sold in 1941 as part of his widow's estate, is now lost.

58. *Collection Kélekian: Tableaux de l'école française moderne* (Paris, New York, and Cairo: n.p., 1920).

59. Roger Fry, "Modern Paintings in a Collection of Ancient Art," *The Burlington Magazine* 37 (December 1920): 303–9. Reprinted in *Illustrated Catalogue of the Notable Private Collection*.

60. *Illustrated Catalogue of the Notable Private Collection*. Walters's lack of interest in this sale—and presumably in its contents—is reinforced by the fact that the catalogue was not in the extensive reference library that formed part of his 1931 bequest.

61. See the passage from Kelekian, *Potteries of Persia*. The Legion of Honor award is mentioned in Kelekian's *New York Times* obituary, 31 January 1951. The dealer had his portrait painted numerous times by artists whose careers he supported. Many of these paintings were exhibited in New York in 1944. The introduction to the exhibition catalogue emotes that "no collector in America, during the first two decades of the century, was more alive to the importance of modern French painters; no one more convinced that Cézanne and his followers were masters of the first and most indubitable order." Frank Crowninshield, in *Kelekian as the Artist Sees Him* (New York: Durand-Ruel Galleries, 1944), n.p. Other publications related to Kelekian's modern collection are cited in the appendix. See also John Rewald, *Cézanne and America: Dealers, Collectors, Artists and Critics, 1891–1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 319–21, 341–42.

62. For the painting by Gérôme (WAG 37.34), see n. 45. The other paintings referred to here are WAG 37.6 (Delacroix), WAG 37.136 (Schreyer), WAG 37.105 (Villegas), WAG 37.82 (Clairin). See Johnston, *Nineteenth-Century Paintings*, cat. nos. 13, 195, 219, 134.

63. WAG 37.191 (Fortuny, purchased 1898); WAG 37.883 (Gérôme, purchased 1917); WAG 37.169 (Weeks, purchased from the artist's estate in 1905); WAG 37.887 (Ingres, purchased 1925). See Johnston, *Nineteenth-Century Paintings*, cat. nos. 215, 110, and 6; Edward S. King and Marvin C. Ross, *Catalogue of the American Works of Art* (Baltimore: Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery, 1956), cat. no. 38.

64. The museum's current automated provenance records specify Kelekian as a source for only about one-quarter of the total Islamic collection. William Johnston agrees, however, that the actual tally of Islamic works sold by Kelekian to Walters was doubtless much higher. The museum also acquired objects from the Kelekian estate after his death, such as an Iznik plate decorated with a cypress, tulips, and roses (WAG 48.2057).

65. Crowninshield, in *Kelekian as the Artist Sees Him*, n.p. (see above, n. 59).

66. According to a letter he wrote Dorothy Kent Hill, Curator of Ancient Art at the Walters, on 12 February 1975, Charles Kelekian first met Walters in France in 1919, "and from then on, I helped him in his selections and transactions with my father, up to the time of his death." Charles carried on the Kelekian family business long after both Dikran and Henry had passed away, and in 1966 he sold the Walters Art Gallery a so-called Golden Horn plate with fine spiral designs (WAG 48.2251). The Walters also owns a charming pastel portrait of Charles Kelekian at age twelve by Mary Cassatt (WAG 37.3656), who had been a friend of both Dikran Kelekian and Henry Walters. William R. Johnston, "Recent Acquisition: Mary Cassatt's Portrait of Charles Dikran Kelekian," *Walters Art Gallery Bulletin* 46 (February 1993): 2.

67. The first part of this quotation comes from a staff memorandum recording Charles's visit (see n. 39). The second half comes from Charles's letter to Miss Hill, cited in the previous note. Admittedly the younger Kelekian would want to cast the relationship between his father and Henry Walters, one of the senior Kelekian's main customers, in sympathetic and even nostalgic terms, especially in light of his own interest in continuing to do business with the Walters Art Gallery.

Appendix

PUBLICATIONS BY, AND ABOUT THE COLLECTIONS OF, DIKRAN KELEKIAN

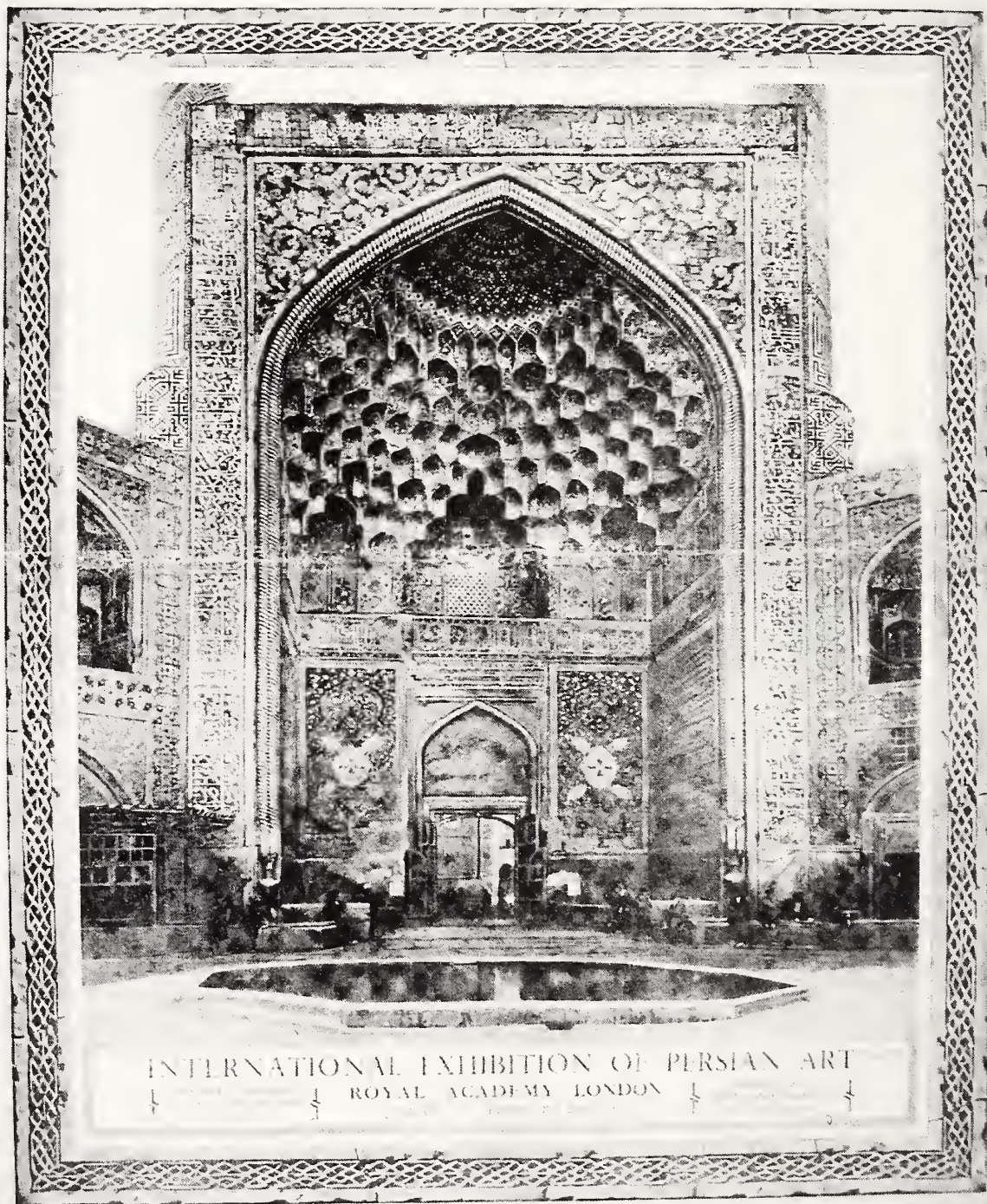
- | | | | |
|---------|--|-------|--|
| 190? | <p><i>La Collection Kélekian: Etoffes et tapis d'orient et de Venise.</i> Introduction by Jules Guiffrey and contributions by Gaston Migeon. Paris: Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, n.d.</p> | 1935 | <p>Dikran Khan Kelekian. <i>Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings of the Moderns: The Private Collection of Dikran G. Kelekian</i> (sale catalogue no. 427, 18 January 1935). New York: Rains Galleries.</p> |
| 1904 | <p><i>Catalogue of Ceramics, Textiles, Rare Rugs, Jewelry and Manuscripts from the Private Collection of Dikran Khan Kelekian, Commissioner-General for Persia, Exhibited at the Imperial Persian Pavilion, Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Saint Louis, 1904.</i> New York and Paris: n.p.</p> | 1935? | <p><i>Important Documents of Coptic Art in the Collection of Dikran G. Kelekian.</i> New York: Harbon Press, n.d. (Inscribed on flyleaf: Presented by Mr. Kelekian/November 1935.)</p> |
| 1909 | <p>Dikran Khan Kelekian. <i>The Potteries of Persia, Being a Brief History of the Art of Ceramics in the Near East.</i> Paris: Herbert Clarke.</p> | 1938 | <p><i>French Paintings from the Collection of Dikran Kelekian</i> (exhibition catalogue, 5–29 January 1938). New York: Marie Harriman Gallery.</p> |
| 1910 | <p><i>The Kelekian Collection of Persian and Analogous Potteries, 1885–1910.</i> Paris: Herbert Clarke.</p> | | <p><i>A Selected Group of Modern Paintings Belonging to Dikran Khan Kelekian</i> (exhibition catalogue, 6–19 November). New York: American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc.</p> |
| 1917 | <p><i>The Kelekian Collection of Ancient Chinese Potteries.</i> Introduction by John Getz. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago.</p> | 1941 | <p><i>Additional Documents of Coptic Art in the Collection of Dikran G. Kelekian, Inc.</i> New York: [Dikran G. Kelekian, Inc.].</p> |
| 1920 | <p><i>Collection Kélekian: Tableaux de L'école française moderne.</i> Introduction by Arsène Alexandre. Paris, New York, Cairo: n.p.</p> | 1942 | <p><i>Artists of the Remote Past and Their Grandchildren: An Exhibition of Modern American and French Paintings in an Antique Background</i> (exhibition catalogue, 5–31 January 1942). New York: Dikran G. Kelekian, Inc.</p> |
| 1922 | <p><i>Illustrated Catalogue of the Notable Private Collection of Modern French Pictures and a Group of the Works of the Noted American Artist Arthur B. Davies Formed by and Belonging to the Widely Known Antiquarian Dikran Khan Kelekian of Paris and New York</i> (sale catalogue, 24 January 1922). New York: The American Art Association.</p> | | <p><i>A Cross-cut of Art in America: An Exhibition of Some of the Leading Painters and Sculptors in the United States</i> (exhibition catalogue, 21 November–19 December 1942). New York: Dikran G. Kelekian, Inc.</p> |
| 1933–34 | <p>Rudolf M. Riefstahl. <i>Catalogue of an Exhibition of Persian and Indian Miniature Paintings Forming the Private Collection of Dikran Khan Kelekian</i> (exhibition catalogue, 25 November–31 January 1934). New York: n.p.</p> | 1944 | <p><i>Kelekian as the Artist Sees Him</i> (exhibition catalogue, 17 October–4 November). New York: Durand-Ruel Galleries.</p> |
| | <p>Rudolf M. Riefstahl. <i>Catalogue of an Exhibition of Persian and Indian Miniature Paintings Forming the Private Collection of Dikran Khan Kelekian</i> (exhibition catalogue, 6 February–3 March 1934). Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts.</p> | 1953 | <p><i>The Dikran Kelekian Collection. Part I. Near Eastern Art . . .</i> (sale catalogue, 21–23 October 1953). New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc.</p> |
| | | | <p><i>The Dikran Kelekian Collection. Part II, Final. Near Eastern Art . . .</i> (sale catalogue, 16–17 December 1953). New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc.</p> |

*“A Great Symphony of Pure Form”:
The 1931 International Exhibition
of Persian Art and Its Influence*

ABSTRACT

The 1931 International Exhibition of Persian Art, the brainchild of Arthur Upham Pope, was a grand extravaganza that brought Persian art to the forefront of public awareness. For a brief, intense period, all London was abuzz with the delirious enjoyment of the riot of “pure form” to be found at Burlington House. While the excitement died down after the close of the exhibition, its more profound effects were just beginning to be felt. Certain basic premises about Persia and its art, held subconsciously by most and expressed with passionate explicitness by Pope, gave the exhibition its unique intensity and ensured that its influence would continue to be felt in scholarship and museum exhibitions for decades to come.

The Times PERSIAN ART NUMBER



SINCE ITS BIRTH as a discipline, the study of Islamic art has been dogged by faulty conceptions of the Middle East and its peoples. Among these are the view of Islamic art as "pure decoration" and the various racial categories invoked to explain the different artistic production of different regions in the Islamic world. Many students of Islamic art, especially those just coming to grips with the particular nature of the field as an object of study, do not fully grasp how these misconceptions worked in the minds of the people who propounded them or the means by which they were translated into museum exhibitions and books. In order to understand Islamic art on its own terms and extricate Islamic art history from the grip of these stereotypes, it is important to understand the specific mechanisms that helped entrench them. In this essay I shall try to shed some light on one groundbreaking exhibition and its role in the construction of the "discourse" of Islamic art history.

My focus here is one of the most important twentieth-century displays of the Middle East: the International Exhibition of Persian Art, held in London in 1931. Its importance derives not only from its scale or visibility, both of which were tremendous; rather, this exhibition illustrates the means by which certain conceptions of "exotic" peoples and their art become received truths in the culture at large. By virtue of its scale, scope, and the intensity with which it played out its animating idea, the great Persian Exhibition helped to entrench stereotypes of the Middle East and its art in the minds of a generation.

THE 1931 INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF PERSIAN ART

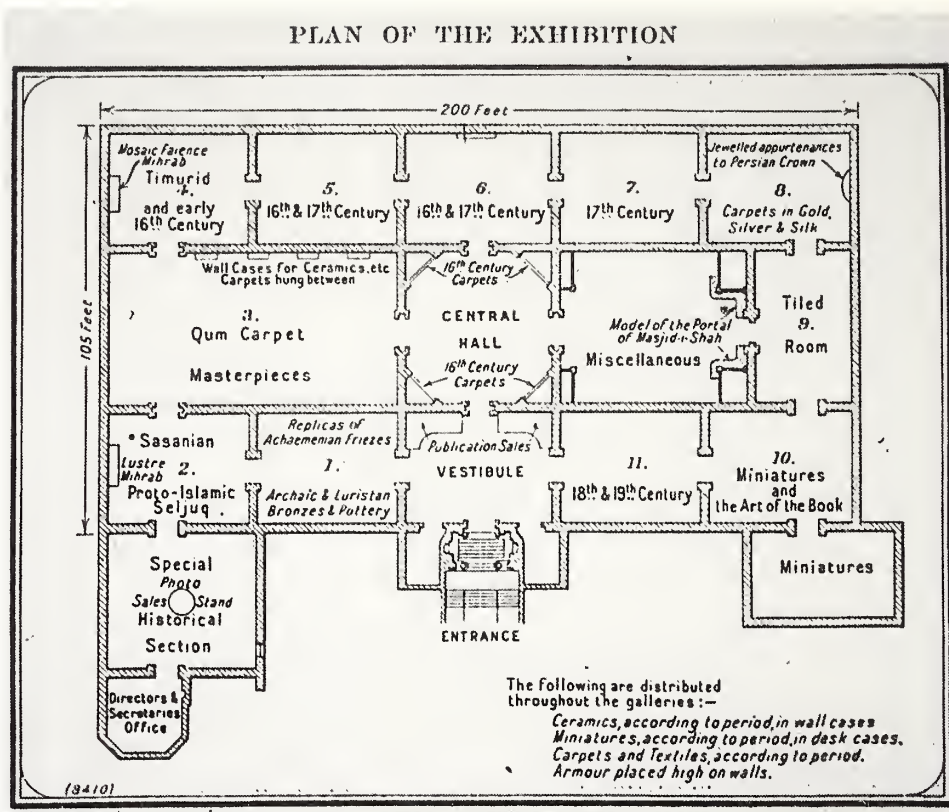
The International Exhibition of Persian Art was one of a series of large, thematically organized exhibitions held at the Royal Academy at London's Burlington House in the late 1920s and early 1930s. These exhibitions, all of which were grand spectacles much in the spirit of the great World's Fair exhibitions of the time, had in recent years included shows of Dutch art, Flemish art, and Italian art.¹ In keeping with this spirit of magnificence, the organizers of the Persian Exhibition sought the greatest possible array of the

best Persian art to be found—and they got it. More than two thousand works of Persian art, with an estimated value of \$10 million, were brought to Burlington House from collections all over the world² in a spectacle that cost \$50,000 just to assemble.³

The Persian Exhibition was intended to treat the public to "sixty centuries of Persian art, from the early Elamite to the Safair [*sic*] Shahs."⁴ The chief sponsors of the show were King George of England and Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran; their prestige encouraged donations from governments, museums, and collectors in some thirty countries.⁵ Among the museums contributing to the exhibition were numerous American institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the American Numismatic Society.⁶ The advent of this panoply of artistic treasures was trumpeted to the museum-going public by a full-fledged modern media blitz intended to be worthy of the glories on display. This included a series of two hundred lectures across Britain, a special supplement to the London *Times* (the "Persian Art Number" of 5 January [fig. 1]), and extensive radio coverage; those interested could even sign up for Persian lessons.⁷

By any standard, this was a truly astonishing gathering of Persian art. Practically every moment of the cultural and religious history of Persia had its artistic representative: Achaemenid sculpture, Sasanian silver, ceramics and mosaics from the length and breadth of Iran, a wealth of carpets and textiles, and the greatest collection of illuminated manuscripts brought together up to that point. Some of these artworks had reputations that preceded them; for example, the original manuscript of Omar Khayyām's *Rubā'īyāt* from which Fitzgerald had made his famous "translation" was on display, complete with Fitzgerald's own handwritten annotations. Shown, too, were four of "the world's most famous carpets," including the Ardabil carpet from the Victoria and Albert Museum.⁸ Perhaps the most impressive displays in the exhibition, however, were two of the main showpieces: a thirty-foot replica of the portal of the royal mosque at Isfahan, painstakingly reproduced from photos of the original, and a display of the crown jewels of Persia.⁹

FIG. 2. *Floor plan of the International Exhibition of Persian Art, as printed in the Persian Art Number of the London Times. Copyright Royal Academy.*



Given the amazing range and variety of the artworks they had been able to procure, the organizers of the Persian Exhibition could have assembled the definitive “guided tour” of the history of Persian art. Yet what is striking about the descriptions and reviews of the show is how lightly the historical factor seems to have weighed as an organizational principle. Rather than a chronologically arranged exhibition designed to educate the viewer about the development of the arts in Persia, the wealth of artistic treasures on display was conceived as a decorative extravaganza that would bowl viewers over from the moment they set foot in the building.

“The moment one passes over the threshold of Burlington House,” exclaimed the *New York Times* correspondent, “it is like stepping into a re-creation from ‘The Arabian Nights’.”¹⁰ The exhibition was an all-encompassing spectacle in which viewers would lose themselves in the glow of the magnificent objects surrounding them on every side, “a decorative scheme which alternately lull[ed] and excite[d] the senses.”¹¹ “Nothing like it has been seen before,” wrote the art critic of the *London Times*, “and noth-

ing that has been said about it in anticipation prepared one for the actual effect.”¹² The walls were draped with carpets, the cases stuffed with objects, all of it creating an atmosphere of absorption in which visitors were exhorted to “get thoroughly soaked.”¹³ People were said actually to lose their sense of the architectural structure of the exhibition halls in the glow of Persian ornament surrounding them.¹⁴ The artworks, carefully placed for optimal dramatic effect, were even displayed under tinted theatrical lights when it was deemed necessary to highlight their decorative splendor still further.¹⁵ All around there was nothing to be seen but “strange and striking refinements and harmonies of decoration and design, manifested alike in miniatures and in metal-work, in textiles and in faience.”¹⁶ It was, wrote one grateful attendee in a letter to the *London Times*, “a glimpse into something like the fairyland of our childhood.”¹⁷

A general chronological sequence was observed in the galleries, in that separate rooms were devoted (largely) to different historical periods (fig. 2); but on the whole the issue of the historical contexts of the artworks was simply not addressed. Consider the

entry for one display case, chosen at random: it lists, side by side, a twelfth-century stone beaker, a thirteenth-century glazed earthenware "Head of a Chinaman," a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century Timurid armlet, and a seal with the monogram of Shah 'Abbās II (1642–66).¹⁸ Questions of historical context were trumped by purely visual considerations; in the "Gallery of Honor," for example, groups of ceramic plates were used as "points of color focus," placed so as to set off the shimmer of the carpets around them.¹⁹ This displacement of facts by glitter was noted with approval by the London *Times* art critic, who praised "the skill with which historical sequence has been reconciled so far as possible with an evenly decorative display."²⁰ In such an atmosphere even human beings might be perceived as decorative additions: one newspaper story reported that the "turbans and multi-colored garb" of the visiting delegates of the Indian Conference blended most harmoniously with the riotous colors and designs of the exhibition.²¹

Unsurprisingly, at least one reviewer found this whole experience "somewhat bewildering."²² Bewildering it no doubt was; as should be apparent, the planners of the Persian Exhibition had deliberately avoided an intellectual approach to their material. No effort was made to communicate any idea of the historical contexts of the artworks on display or of the development of Persian art over the centuries. An ivory-tower approach, it was felt, would spoil the fun of soaking in the glow of faïences and carpets. This point was well taken; the London *Times* review of the show explicitly advised visitors *not* to "verify or extend" their knowledge of Persian art, lest they sacrifice their enjoyment of the atmosphere of immersion to the niggling pursuit of particulars.²³ (No one needed worry about verifying or extending their knowledge of Persian art by reading the catalogue entries, as these were barely more than object names and dates.)

Such, then, was the nature of the International Exhibition of Persian Art. It is certainly rare for a museum exhibition to trumpet its guiding principle with such uncompromising intensity. The basic premise underlying the show—the Arabian Nights stereotype of "Eastern" art as a timeless, undifferentiated blaze of sense-dulling bedazzlement—was nothing new, and the development of this view in the

West has been a subject of study for some time.²⁴ Yet the Persian Exhibition was unusual in its aggressive adherence to a quite particular conception of Persia and its art. To understand what drove this extraordinary display, it is necessary to consider the indefatigable prime mover behind it.

"PURE FORM" AND *HOMO PERSICUS*

The conception, organization, and execution of the 1931 Persian Exhibition were in large part the responsibility of one man, the American Persophile Arthur Upham Pope (fig. 3). Manic, driven, and visionary, by turns grandiloquent and picayune, Pope was possessed of an unquenchable zeal for things Iranian that informed the Persian Exhibition from its inception. Pope considered art to be "the most fundamental characteristic and activity of the Iranian peoples,"²⁵ and his passionate convictions on what art *was*—art in general, and Persian art in particular—gave rise to his peculiar idea of the appropriate way of exhibiting Persian art to a Western audience.

Pope's original training was in philosophy; he had started his career as a professor of aesthetics at



FIG. 3. Arthur Upham Pope, ca. 1929. After Sadiq, *Past and Future of Persian Art*.

Berkeley.²⁶ Hence he approached Persian art not as a scholar of the Middle East but as an aesthete. His aesthetic, in keeping with the times, was formalism: he felt the unifying characteristic of all art to be “pure” (or “significant”) form.²⁷ Pure form took its importance from the nature of the mind itself: “[T]he human mind must, inevitably from its very character, organize its experiences in ordered forms, and its progress is measured by the degree to which the original vagueness and chaos gradually takes substance, variety, organization, and character through the operation of consciousness.”²⁸

Such ideals as clarity, precision, orderliness, and rhythmic design were thus expressions of a basic function of consciousness, the imprint of man’s cognitive faculty on the raw material of sense perception.²⁹ On this view, which Pope explicitly owed to Plato via Kant and Bosanquet, the essence of spiritual progress is to discover and master the universal forms inherent in reality but obscured by the chaos of experience; the “pure form” of art strikes the viewer with such memorable power because it affords a sense of the universals of “ultimate reality” lurking behind the mundane particulars of daily life.³⁰ Thanks to its ability to afford us this glimpse of eternity, “decorative art,” wrote Pope, “may have a deeper spiritual quality.”³¹ This spiritual quality occasionally inspired Pope to some of his finest flights of eloquence, as in this comment on a mosaic faience: “The color is but an adornment of the pattern and those who have the patience and clear-mindedness to see beneath the first bewildering glory will find there a logic of purest ray serene, without which all would be as Babel, but by grace of which all tones sing together as in a celestial choir.”³²

In his advocacy of “pure form,” Pope was not championing anything new. Formalism, as indicated above, was the aesthetic of the day in the early twentieth century. Pope’s version, however, had no room for art movements such as Cubism or abstraction. Indeed, Pope turned a witheringly contemptuous eye on modern art.³³ The noble ideal of art as pure form, he felt, was being “pressed with extravagance and theoretical ignorance, with arguments riddled with fallacies, which have encouraged charlatanism amounting to delirium that has its roots in characteristic maladies of the age.”³⁴ Pure form, for Pope, had to be beautiful to be worthy of the name. This tinge of aristocratic

elitism was rooted in the earliest formalist connoisseurship, such as that indulged in by the French jeweler and art collector Henri Vever and his circle.³⁵

There was an art that carried the wondrous potential of pure form to its fullest glory, an art whose transcendent purity and loveliness Pope never tired of praising. This, of course, was Persian art. It was an art that had begun when those first prehistoric artists had “clarified and controlled” reality by the primary cognitive act of symbolism, interpreting it in a new form.³⁶ There followed an unbroken stream of artistic development from the mists of the Luristani past up to the Pahlavi present, like a great symphony of pure form playing out over the ages.³⁷ The “orchestra” in question was the Persian people—or, more precisely, the Persian *spirit*.

A keen decorative sense, Pope believed, permeated all Persian art because it permeated all Persian thought.³⁸ Persians, for Pope and those of his circle, were a people raised in an inherently artistic culture, where poetry was part of one’s daily sustenance. They were by their nature inclined toward clarity, abstraction, and poetic and mystical turns of mind, a “metaphysically minded people” for whom the “Choir of Heaven was always as near and real as the Furniture of Earth.”³⁹ Even the Iranian climate contributed to the formation of the Persian soul, with the omnipresent bright sunshine giving rise to a predilection for lucidity and a distaste for obscurity.⁴⁰

All these traits, in Pope’s view, formed the warp and weft of the unique mentality of the peoples of Iran and underlay the development of their arts. It was this fundamental rooting of pure form in the Persian mind itself that ensured artistic continuity even as foreign influences were exerted.⁴¹ Thus the Arab invasions, which brought Iran into the fold of Islam and marked the beginning of several centuries of foreign rule, had in Pope’s eyes but little effect on Persian art: despite some linguistic influence, and a shift to more iconoclastic tendencies (which were actually a boon, helping to shift Persian art back to its forte of pure form after the more Hellenizing naturalism of Sasanian art), “in its depths the Iranian spirit was scarcely even stirred by these aliens [Arabs] whom it could well dismiss as inferiors.”⁴² In a review of Pope’s *Survey of Persian Art*, Meyer Schapiro pointed out that the premise behind that work seemed to be that the qualities of

Persian art were "permanent biological products of a Persian species of man"⁴³—*Homo persicus*.

Today's scholars would speedily reject the notion that two thousand years of artistic development can be seen as the expression of one "national spirit." Yet Pope took this idea very seriously indeed, and understanding it is crucial to a full comprehension of his museum exhibitions. For it is Pope's view of Persian art as a unitary spiritual whole that gives rise to phenomena like the Persian Pavilion he designed for the 1926 Sesquicentennial International Exposition in Philadelphia, a sort of lesser world's fair celebrating 150 years of American independence. From the front, the building was intended to look like a Safavid mosque (fig. 4); but for the side of the building Pope commissioned a reproduction of a Sasanian royal relief carving (fig. 5). This stunning chronological, religious, and cultural dissonance is a powerful reminder of the philosophical baggage Pope brought to his writings on, and exhibitions of, Persian art.⁴⁴

It is this baggage that explains the powerful emphasis on decorative force, and the corresponding lack of interest in historical context, that characterized the 1931 Persian Exhibition. Every period of Persian art, from the earliest geometric pottery to the heights of Safavid architectural sophistication, was subsumed under the overarching theme of the Persian decorative spirit. Thus, for example, the recently discovered Luristan bronzes were praised for their "energy of line, high spirit, originality and decorative force."⁴⁵ The "quick-witted" Achaemenids were hailed for assimilating the art of the cultures they encountered into a unity characterized by "lucidity and distinction, as well as a lordly scale and opulence, unstinted but rational."⁴⁶ This unity was seen especially in the sculptures of Persepolis, which, imbued with the artistic instincts of the Persian spirit, exhibited "a lucidity of outline, a concentration and graceful dispersion of line, an ordered and complex rhythm that are the essence of decoration and quite characteristically Oriental."⁴⁷ The section on Sasanian art demonstrated "the truly Iranian genius of this mighty dynasty," which not even the impact of Roman artistic influence could sway from "its controlling ideals of pattern first and Nature afterward."⁴⁸ Sasanian rock sculpture was said to derive its considerable aesthetic

impact from "the simplicity of the masses and the quiet but tidal rhythms that pulse through them."⁴⁹ The manuscript illuminations, too, which were scattered throughout the various rooms of the exhibition like seasoning, were invoked as manifestations of the Persian artist's tendency to turn loose "the inner and recondite harmonies of the human imagination" on the material of the external world, creating magnificent combinations of color, pattern, and composition rather than slavish imitations of nature.⁵⁰ Such was the inherent decorative genius of Persia, according to one of the exhibition's organizers, that even if the Arabs had not brought "those precious gifts, the arabesque and the elegant Arabic script," the Persians would have created an art of the beautiful book by themselves.⁵¹

RECEPTION AND INFLUENCE

The image of Persian art as the expression of the spirit of a nation of born decorators may not pass muster in the eyes of modern scholarship, but this idea had real resonance in its day. Persia was already saddled with an exotic reputation thanks to ages of "Arabian Nights"-style stereotypes (fig. 6). Now it was in the news again, as a long-benighted land emerging into modernity under the guidance of the benevolent strongman Reza Shah Pahlavi. A clever little map of Persia published in conjunction with the Persian Exhibition (fig. 7) shows both of these aspects of the Persia myth. In various parts of the country we see candy-cane minarets, Alexander the Great marching off to "capture the world and [become] its commander," and, along the gulf shore, the mighty oil derricks of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company chugging away in industrial splendor. To this well-prepared ground Pope added his own fervid vision of Persian art as a phenomenon of *metaphysical* import—the eternal self-revelation of the Persian soul.

With such an impressive list of reasons to be interested in Persian art, few could resist the opportunity to see the Persian Exhibition. The show was a huge success. Three thousand tickets were sold on opening day alone, only slightly fewer than the opening-day results for the previous year's exhibition of Italian art.⁵² By the end of the show's three-month run, 259,000 people had attended,⁵³ including such

FIG. 4. *The Persian Pavilion of the 1926 Sesquicentennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia, designed by Arthur Upham Pope. After Sadiq, Past and Future of Persian Art.*



FIG. 5. *A workman putting the finishing touches on Pope's 1926 Persian Pavilion. After the catalogue of the Sesquicentennial Exhibition.*



luminaries as H. G. Wells, Winston Churchill, George Bernard Shaw, and the Aga Khan.⁵⁴ Of the major exhibitions of the previous three years (Flemish, Dutch, and Italian art) only the Italian Exhibition of 1930 had surpassed this attendance figure, but it had remained open three weeks longer than did the Persian Exhibition.

The success of the show was more than simply financial, however. The Persian Exhibition made its presence felt in many areas of English life. Within days of the exhibition's opening, people read about how London was showing signs of "going Persian."⁵⁵ As might be expected, there was heightened consumer

FIG. 6. *Mr. Punch welcoming the New Year of 1931 in a tribute to the International Exhibition of Persian Art, Punch, 7 January 1931. Copyright Punch Ltd.*



MAGIC ENTRY OF THE NEW YEAR.

MR PUNCH, *impressed by the Persian* PERSIAN CALDO PUER APPALAVUS IN OTHER WORDS I WELCOME YOUR PERSIAN SHOW MY BOY WITH THE GREATEST ENTHUSIASM

interest in Persianizing carpets, dressing gowns and other textiles, and pottery.⁵⁶ While the actual economic (and sartorial) effects of the exhibition were not that great, the widespread impression that they *were* was enough to inspire a wealth of satirical observations from *Punch*.

One wag lamented having taken his wife to the Persian Exhibition, for she had begun gliding dreamily about the house in slippers, quoting Omar

Khayyām and filling the cupboards with Persian-style crockery; she had also renamed their country cottage Isfahan and the cat Artaxerxes.⁵⁷ Another wrote, "A music expert points out that the Persian scale can be rendered roughly on the bagpipes. Still, we hope it won't."⁵⁸ Yet another twitted the public for letting the aura of the Persian Exhibition so besot them that they lowered their aesthetic standards, unwilling to admit the gaudiness of some of the pieces on display:



FIG. 7. Map of "Persia Ancient and Modern," after advertisement in the Persian Art Number of the London Times. Copyright British Petroleum plc 1931.

JANUARY 21, 1931

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

67



THE PERSIAN CULT
AL-RUSCHID HOUR IN THE WEST END

FIG. 8. "The Persian Cult: Al-Ruschid Hour in the West End," Punch, 21 January 1931. Copyright Punch Ltd.

I sometimes think some Gold looks much like Brass,
Some Gems too big, like Chunks of coloured Glass,
Yet these recall *Aladdin*, and "The Nights";
We do not reason, but we glance—and pass.⁵⁹

Alongside such mockery ran amusing cartoons such as the two reproduced here (figs. 8 and 9). One shows a scene of traffic congestion at "Al-Ruschid Hour," complete with flying-carpet taxis, female pedestrians duly veiled, and sherbet advertisements. In

the other the artist has depicted the inaugural meeting of the "Worshipful Company of Hubble-Bubble-Makers," a gathering of stodgy-looking English gentlemen in their vests and monocles seated on carpets Persian-style and surrounded by lissome serving girls twirling about in an Orientalist fantasy.

Punch's teasing is not only good fun poked at the foibles of an overly enthusiastic public; it is also valuable testimony to the fact that London really was in the grip of a "Persian cult" for at least the period

FIG. 9. "The Persian Cult: Inaugural Dinner of the Worshipful Company of Hubble-Bubble-Makers," *Punch*, 14 January 1931. Copyright *Punch Ltd.*



of the Persian Exhibition. Many observers honestly thought that the popularity of the exhibition meant that this massive display of decorative ingenuity would have lasting effects on the contemporary world. A prominent candidate was the flagging English arts and crafts industry, which, it was hoped, would take inspiration from the Persians and soar to new heights of creativity. "Are there not lessons," one writer wondered, "for our decorators and designers, for our weavers and potters, in these jewels of an art

that goes back to Cyrus the Great King, and beyond him to the empires of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Medes?"⁶⁰ And did not Picasso get his start as a great innovator, people asked, by a chance visit to an African exhibition?⁶¹ To fan the fires of English creativity more deliberately, art students and craftsmen were enticed to come to Burlington House with discounted ticket prices,⁶² extended opening hours,⁶³ and even special transport to the show.⁶⁴

A further effect of the "Persian cult" was anticipated

in women's fashions. A Persian vogue was forecast, and dress- and jewelry-makers flocked to London to prepare for the imminent rage for Persian hats, necklaces, and fabrics. One writer predicted that "Persian hats worn with Persian necklaces will soon be adorning sleek feminine heads and elegant necks." Even personal grooming was no exception: "Nor should the possible effect of the exhibition on women's eyebrows be overlooked. The present habit of plucking eyebrows may be abandoned in the enthusiasm for Persian beauties who it is seen in the exhibition allow their eyebrows to grow as nature intended."⁶⁵

The most exuberant predictions for the success of the Persian Exhibition came, not surprisingly, from Arthur Upham Pope himself. He saw the recognition of the greatness of Persian art and the "intelligent appropriation of its values" as part of the dawn of a second Renaissance, which would see a series of discoveries of "spiritual values" to match and "compensate for" the modern West's technological and industrial accomplishments.⁶⁶

AFTEREFFECTS

Needless to say, these great expectations did not pan out. Any increase in demand for Persianizing textiles or crafts was ephemeral, Pope's "second Renaissance" certainly did not emerge, and women's eyebrows quickly receded to pre-exhibition levels. To be sure, it would take more than a single museum exhibition, no matter how large and impressive, to shift overnight the course of a whole nation's culture or economics. Yet blockbuster shows like the Persian Exhibition can have powerful effects, long-range and not immediately apparent. Pope's International Exhibition of Persian Art exerted a potent influence on a whole generation of viewers and connoisseurs by strengthening immensely the stereotypes about Persia and Persian art to which it had played so successfully.

One of its means of influence was the publications accompanying the show. Foremost among these was Pope's own *magnum opus*, the six-volume *Survey of Persian Art*. Originally scheduled for publication at the time of the Persian Exhibition but delayed until 1938, this monumental work is a Herculean ef-

fort to treat the various arts of Persia over several millennia—from the distinctive viewpoint of Arthur Upham Pope and his circle. Indeed, the *Survey* helped further to propagate Pope's notion, implicit in the 1931 Persian Exhibition, that any good Islamic art must perforce be Persian (cf. the inclusion of the famous "Baptistère de Saint Louis," a masterpiece of *Mamluk* art). Yet despite the failings of the text, which were recognized even when it was first published,⁶⁷ the photographs are an absolutely invaluable resource, and the *Survey* remains fundamental reference material to this day.

The Persian Exhibition had a pronounced influence on the study of Persian manuscript painting in particular. The all-important conduit for this influence was the 1933 tome *Persian Miniature Painting* by Laurence Binyon, J. V. S. Wilkinson, and Basil Gray (characteristically referred to in the literature as "BWG"). Essentially an expanded catalogue of the Persian manuscripts that had been displayed at the Persian Exhibition in 1931, "BWG," like the *Survey of Persian Art*, is a true milestone of scholarship and still a touchstone of reference in the study of Persian painting. The canonical set of attributions, nomenclature, and classifications established therein has survived with only slight modifications to the present day. More important than the details of the book, however, was the methodology enshrined in it: a "taxonomic" approach to Persian painting highly adept at the determination of dates, provenances, and artists' hands but stopping short, as it were, at the surface of the page, content to relish the "intoxicating potency" of Persian color and the "physical thrill of pleasure" afforded by a good Persian line.⁶⁸ If the premises on which this approach to Persian painting is based are accepted as true, then this is indeed the appropriate methodology by which to approach the art: if the essence of the material lies *solely* in its form, the careful classification of subtly varying forms is the basic scholarly task to be undertaken. The question of the origin and meaning of the forms has, after all, long since been answered: "[A]s a race the Persians are born decorators."⁶⁹

In considering the influence of the Persian Exhibition of 1931 on the study of Persian and Islamic art, one individual case is instructive. Among the throngs of spectators at the exhibition was the young

B. W. Robinson. Robinson had first been introduced to Persian painting at the age of eight, but it was the Persian Exhibition that really whetted his appetite for it.⁷⁰ He visited the show repeatedly, and when the scholar J. V. S. Wilkinson visited Robinson's school for a public lecture on the exhibition, he encouraged the lad to pursue this interest.⁷¹ This, of course, he did famously. (In an interesting and telling junction, Robinson's B.Litt. thesis, a descriptive catalogue of the Persian paintings in the Bodleian Library, was supervised by "BWG" authors Basil Gray and Laurence Binyon.)⁷² More important than Robinson's prolificacy, however, is his underlying view of the nature of Persian painting as essentially an art of pure form, a view he absorbed at least in part from the Persian Exhibition. Forget the highfalutin theories of art critics, Robinson once advised, and approach Persian paintings with child-like naïveté. The best way to enjoy the art is simply to revel in the beautiful lines, rich colors, and "strange" stories. "The beauties of Persian painting are all on the surface," he wrote, and "the simpler our approach, the quicker and truer will be our appreciation."⁷³

Art historians have turned against this kind of attitude with much sound and fury in recent years, and to a certain extent for the better. Yet this reaction should not dim our appreciation of the genuine achievement of writers like Binyon, Wilkinson, Gray, and Robinson. Their labors produced a corpus of basic knowledge about Persian painting—a framework of dates, attributions, influences, and other such data—which is the indispensable basis on which to build future progress in understanding Persian painting. The foundation they laid may be rudimentary, but it is essential.

FROM PERCEPTUAL TO CONCEPTUAL APPRECIATION

It takes but little effort, however, to realize that at least one criticism of the old ways is undeniably true. The project of taxonomy and attribution, insofar as it refuses to consider issues beyond the surface of the page, does not go far enough to illuminate the deeper nature of Persian painting. It stops frustratingly short of the

really interesting questions, those that address art as a product of the eternally fascinating human mind.

Consider, for example, the painting from the "Great Mongol" *Shāhnāma* that shows the enthronement of Shah Zav-i Tahmāsp.⁷⁴ Once it would have been considered sufficient to establish the date, place, and artistic influences that went into such a painting—then, the hard work done, to sit back and revel in the beautiful lines, colors, and so forth. But scholars have come to realize that beneath the surface beauty so dear to the aesthete, there is much more intellectual work to be done. For example, if one reads the text—a skill pointedly lacking in the early scholar-connoisseurs—one notes that Shah Zav ruled for only five years, making him a distinctly minor figure in the centuries-long epic. Why, then, was he accorded such a fine illustration in this manuscript? What does the inclusion of his enthronement in the illustrative cycle imply about the values or priorities of the patron(s) of the book?⁷⁵ What, indeed, does such art tell us about the drives, hopes, aspirations, values, and *lives* of the people who made it?

These are exactly the kinds of questions that befit a proper, humanistic approach to displaying the Middle East (or, for that matter, any "exotic" culture). Such questions lead the thoughtful viewer to empathize with the creators of the artwork, to regard them as human beings rather than as the cardboard cutouts already known from the stereotypes at large in the culture (which give rise to notions like "The paintings look that way because the Persians are a race of born decorators"). To be sure, there is much for the scholar to puzzle over that is too abstruse for an average museum exhibition and better left to specialized journals. But behind both the human-interest questions so useful for making "exotic" cultures accessible to the average museum-goer, as well as the arcana of the ivory tower, is the idea, appealing to all, that art provides a unique window into the workings of the human mind and into what makes us what we are: thinking, valuing beings.

To appreciate the promise and the difficulty of such an approach, it is valuable to consider the 1989 exhibition *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, organized by the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.⁷⁶ Like the Persian Exhibition of

1931, *Timur and the Princely Vision* was a major loan exhibition gathering together some of the finest artistic products of Persian culture from a plethora of sources. But while it shared with the 1931 extravaganza an intention to bring the glories of Iranian creativity to a Western audience, *Timur and the Princely Vision* differed from its predecessor in that the sensationist appeal of Arthur Upham Pope's day had given way to a much more intellectually oriented approach, the perceptual emphasis to a conceptual one. In London, the goal had been the maximum sensory dazzle in a whirlwind tour of six thousand years of art. In Washington and Los Angeles, the aim was to help the viewer *understand* a certain pattern of patronage over the course of one 100-year dynasty by reference to a specific notion of how culture is made. The exhibition's thematic organization, label text, and 400-page catalogue explained how Timur and his descendants *used* their splendid art as an ideological tool, a way of creating a desired dynastic image within the realm and abroad that would carry the requisite prestige among the cultured. The Timurids, in other words, created art objects of matchless beauty—for a specific *reason*.

The theme of the show was the use of art by the house of Timur as a means of projecting "cultural prowess." A splendid Timurid jug (cat. no. 57), for example, is discussed in the exhibition catalogue not only in terms of its superb craftsmanship but as an example of the Timurids' cultivation of the "sophisticated aura associated with the Persian language" through the use of verses of Persian poetry on their metalwork instead of the traditional figural decoration. This in turn is linked to the literary basis of Timurid cultural prowess, a crucial factor in the formation of the Timurid visual canon.⁷⁷ Thus also the repetition in two manuscripts of a composition of Bahrām Gūr hunting is set forth as an example not merely of the outstanding formal skills of Persian painters, and certainly not of their lack of creativity,⁷⁸ but of the codification of imagery under the Timurid *kitābkhāna* system, a process that included the repetition of compositions from one painting to another.⁷⁹ For both of these objects, as for the exhibition as a whole, the tone is one not of breathless wonder but of aesthetic appreciation *plus* a spirited attempt to create a new framework within which to understand Timurid patronage.

The framework laid out in the *Timur and the Princely Vision* exhibition and catalogue is, to be sure, open to criticism on various points. For example, there is too much emphasis on the sociopolitical interpretation of Timurid art at the expense of the aesthetic, on the Timurids' *use* of art for external purposes over and above their *experience* of it. There is also the questionable notion that the Timurid princes drove one of the most astonishing bursts of artistic glory in history primarily as a means of currying the favor of the culturally advanced among their subjects. Yet it is surely true that this exhibition displayed a considerably more sophisticated view of art (and of Persians) than did its predecessor in 1931. The explanation of the objects on view in *Timur and the Princely Vision* was one that should have appealed much more powerfully to the viewer's sense—however implicit—of the Timurids as human beings with whose motivations and values one could empathize, even at a distance.

The context for reception had changed dramatically, however. In the early 1930s Persia was seen as an exotic land of flying carpets, candy-cane minarets, and oil wells. Iran in the late 1980s—need it be said!—had a decidedly different reputation. Thus, while the 1931 Persian Exhibition had the luxury of playing to a preexistent and highly favorable stereotype of Persian art (which, as we have seen, it did much to entrench even further), *Timur and the Princely Vision* had to play *against* a certain image, one of fanaticism and brutality—that of Iran in general and Timur in particular. A manuscript illustration like the famous double-page painting in the Garrett *Zafarnāma* showing Timurid soldiers finishing off the survivors of a conquered Georgian city by lowering themselves in baskets to attack the enemy as they try to hide in caves⁸⁰ would have registered in two completely different ways for visitors to the two shows. For the visitor to the Persian Exhibition, the paintings would have been seen as a visually dynamic depiction of exotic warriors' derring-do, the stuff of romantic legend; for the visitor to *Timur and the Princely Vision*, the painting, for all its undeniable aesthetic appeal, probably would have induced a cringe at the reminder of Timur's notorious cruelty.

Indeed, most people seem to have appreciated the beauty of the artworks against a psychological

backdrop of *surprise* that such a scary person as Timur could have had such good taste. Articles on the show carried titles like "The Sensitivity of a Mass Murderer,"⁸¹ and reviewers observed that "Timur the Incomparable Patron of the Arts" was also "Timur the Matchless Slaughterer of Children."⁸² In this context, too, it is interesting to observe how changing times can blunt people's expectations of museum exhibitions. In 1931 there were thought to be rumblings of an imminent revolution in the arts, crafts, and fashion; in 1989, the most ambitious hope was for an increased appreciation of the value of Persian culture in the wake of a decade of bad press.⁸³ This is an object lesson in the difficulty of displaying a culture such as the Middle East (here including Central Asia), which not only is "exotic" to the Western audience but also has a troubled past and an accordingly troubled reputation. One wonders to what degree the carefully constructed intellectual framework presented in the show was lost on the public in the face of so many negative connotations.

CONCLUSION

The 1931 International Exhibition of Persian Art took a number of preexistent stereotypes about Persia, mixed them with a potent myth about the metaphysical profundity of the very Persian soul, and trumpeted these ideas to a receptive public with all the power of the modern media. The result was the transmission of a distinct notion, not to say caricature, of the nature of Persian art to a whole generation—including, it should be noted, the reviewers and critics of later exhibitions. In recent years scholars and curators have been making new efforts to extricate Persian and Islamic art from the grip of these faulty notions, only to hit the twin obstacles of changing public receptivity to the art (and to the Middle East in general) and—perhaps even more intractable—the difficulty of creating an exhibition framework that is at once intellectually comprehensive enough to do justice to the complexity of the artworks and appealing enough to get visitors in the door. It is these twin obstacles that faced the organizers of the 1989 exhibition *Timur and the Princely Vision*, arguably the most sophisticated exhibition of Islamic

art, from an intellectual standpoint, in recent memory. The tension exhibition organizers face between scholarly integrity and box-office appeal would appear to be as great as ever. The ideal exhibition of Islamic art still lies ahead. □

Notes

1. "Persian Exhibition Closed," *Times* (London), 9 March 1931.
2. "Persian Art Exhibition Interests Londoners," *New York Times*, 4 January 1931.
3. "Persian Art Exhibition Interests Londoners."
4. "Persian Art Exhibit Opens Tomorrow," *New York Times*, 6 January 1931.
5. "Persian Art Exhibit Opens Tomorrow."
6. "Preparing for the Persian Show," *New York Times*, 4 January 1931.
7. A. T. Wilson, "Introductory Note," in *Catalogue of the International Exhibition of Persian Art, 7th January to 7th March, 1931, Royal Academy of Arts, London* (London: Office of the Exhibition, 1931), iv–v.
8. "Persian Art Exhibit Opens Tomorrow."
9. "Persian Art Exhibit Opens Tomorrow." The crown jewels were protected by one of the first motion-detector alarms, which proved almost as much of a draw to visitors as did the jewels themselves (and which caused more than one fainting spell when incautious visitors got too close).
10. "Persian Art Exhibit Opens Tomorrow."
11. "Persian Art: Treasures of 27 Countries," *Times* (London), 7 January 1931.
12. "Persian Art: Treasures of 27 Countries."
13. *Times* (London), 7 January 1931. Even close-range "soaking" was encouraged: viewers could make an appointment with a secretary to take any manuscript out of its display case and leaf through it in her presence. R. H. Wilenski, "London's Persian Exhibition" (review), *New York Times*, 18 January 1931, sec. 8.
14. "Persian Art: Treasures of 27 Countries."

15. Even the latter arrangement fell short of the mark in the eyes of one visitor who, incensed that the colored light would distort the hues of the carpets, wrote a letter to the *Times* demanding to see true "Persian colour." *Times* (London), 12 January 1931.
16. "Persian Art," *Times* (London), Persian Art Number (5 January 1931), vi a.
17. Letter from A. L. N. Russell, F.R.I.B.A., 12 March 1931, 13e.
18. *Catalog of the International Exhibition of Persian Art*, 122–23 (case no. 193).
19. Wilenski, "London's Persian Exhibition."
20. *Times* (London), Persian Art Number (5 January 1931), vii.
21. "London Hails Art of Ancient Persia," *New York Times*, 7 January 1931.
22. "Persian Art Awes Throng in London," *New York Times*, 8 January 1931.
23. "Persian Art Awes Throng in London."
24. See, for instance, Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992). Çelik points out (p. 9) that the Ottoman Empire and the Arab lands provided much more grist for the Orientalist fantasies indulged in by the architects of world's fair pavilions than did Persia, which was geographically more distant and had less history of cultural interaction with Europe. Part of the reaction to the 1931 Persian Exhibition lies in the fact that the mishmash of stereotypes about Islamic art, architecture, and culture engendered by such displays was simply projected onto Persia—"just another 'Oriental' country"—by visitors to the show.
25. A. U. Pope, "The Significance of Persian Art," *A Survey of Persian Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 1:1.
26. By far the most complete survey of Pope's life and ideas is the compilation *Surveyors of Persian Art*, ed. Jay Gluck and Noël Silver (Ashiya, Japan: SoPA, 1996).
27. "The Significance of Persian Art," 28.
28. "The Significance of Persian Art," 30.
29. "The Significance of Persian Art," 11, 29.
30. "The Significance of Persian Art," 32.
31. A. U. Pope, letter to the editor of the London *Times*, 7 January 1931.
32. Pope, "The Spirit of Persian Art," *Studio* 51 (January 1931): 24.
33. This did not prevent others from associating Persian formal splendor with the aims of the modernist movement; one writer commented, "Everyone knows now that Persian art is more 'modern' than tomorrow. It is like a dazzling materialization of the theories of Fry and Wilenski." "Persian Influence—The Galleries," *New York Times*, 22 February 1931.
34. Pope, "The Significance of Persian Art," in A. U. Pope et al., *Masterpieces of Persian Art* (New York: The Dryden Press, 1945), 3.
35. Glenn D. Lowry, "Henri Vever, Art Nouveau and Islamic Art," in Glenn D. Lowry with Susan Nemazee, *A Jeweler's Eye: Islamic Arts of the Book from the Vever Collection* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 14.
36. "The Significance of Persian Art," 2–3.
37. Pope, "The Great Persian Exhibition: A Valedictory Survey," *Studio* 51 (March 1931): 166.
38. Pope, "The Significance of Persian Art," 1.
39. Pope, "The Significance of Persian Art," 12.
40. Pope, "The Significance of Persian Art," 11.
41. One reviewer of the Persian Exhibition wrote that Persian culture was of a "dominant strain" that subsumed and integrated all other strains effortlessly into itself—a telling genetic metaphor and a rather ominous one in the context of the early 1930s. "Persia's Old Art Shines Forth Anew," *New York Times*, 4 January 1931, sec. 5.
42. Pope, "The Significance of Persian Art," 20. The Turks, too, were scorned by Pope, who once said that complex carpet patterns, a glory of Persian art, presented to the Turks "intolerable mental effort" (*The Past and Future of Persian Art*, speech given in April 1925 in Tehran; pub. 1975 by Isa Sadiq of the University of Tehran).
43. *Art Bulletin* 23 (March 1941): 83.
44. Çelik observes that, as here, the architectural "language" of the nineteenth-century Persian pavilions was invariably that of Safavid Isfahan (*Displaying the Orient*, 119).
45. Pope, "Persia's Old Art Shines Forth Anew," *New York Times*, 4 January 1931.
46. Pope, "Persia's Old Art Shines Forth Anew."
47. Pope, "The Spirit of Persian Art," 14.
48. Pope, "The Spirit of Persian Art," 14.

49. Pope, "The Spirit of Persian Art," 14.
50. Pope, "The Spirit of Persian Art," 24.
51. J. V. S. Wilkinson, "Survey of the Exhibits: Manuscript Books," *Times* (London), Persian Art Number (5 January 1931), xii.
52. *Times* (London), 8 January 1931, p. 12.
53. *Times* (London), 9 March 1931, p. 9.
54. "London Hails Art of Ancient Persia," *New York Times*, 7 January 1931.
55. "Persian Exhibition Attracts London," *New York Times*, 11 January 1931.
56. "Persian Exhibition Closed," *Times* (London), 4 March 1931.
57. "The Persian Gulf," *Punch* 180 (28 January 1931): 92.
58. "Charivaria," *Punch* 182 (4 February 1931): 113.
59. "Meet Persia," *Punch* 180 (21 January 1931): 70.
60. *Times* (London), Persian Art Number (5 January 1931), vi.
61. "Persian Influence—The Galleries."
62. Announced by the chairman of the exhibition's executive committee, A. T. Wilson, in a letter to the London *Times* of 8 January 1931.
63. Letter to the London *Times* from A. T. Wilson, 23 January 1931.
64. A special train took more than 500 students from northern English potteries to visit the Persian Exhibition on 16 February 1931. *Times* (London), 17 February 1931, p. 11.
65. "Persian Exhibition Attracts London," *New York Times*, 11 January 1931.
66. Pope, "Persia's Old Art Shines Forth Anew," 8, 15.
67. See, e.g., Meyer Schapiro's review of the whole work (cited in n. 43), as well as the reviews of individual sections by various scholars in *Ars Islamica* 8 (1941).
68. [Laurence Binyon], "Introduction," *Persian Miniature Painting* (London: Oxford University Press [Humphrey Milford], 1933), 10.
69. [Binyon], "Introduction," 7.
70. B. W. Robinson, "A Reminiscence by Way of Introduction," in *Studies in Persian Art* (London: Pindar Press, 1993), 1:i. See also Robinson's "The Burlington House Exhibition of 1931: A Milestone in Islamic Art History," in *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections*, ed. S. Vernoit (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 147–55.
71. Robinson, "Reminiscence," iv–v.
72. The catalogue was eventually published in 1958 by Clarendon Press.
73. B. W. Robinson, *Persian Paintings* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum/Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1965), 5.
74. Exhibited in 1931 (no. 435); reproduced in Lowry with Nemazee, *Jeweler's Eye*, 83.
75. Intriguing solutions to these questions have been proposed over the years, including the groundbreaking work by Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair (*Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shahnama* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980]).
76. Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, exhib. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989).
77. Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 162.
78. A claim not infrequently laid against Persian artists; see even Pope, "The Significance of Persian Art," 4.
79. See appendix III of *Timur and the Princely Vision* for an impressive demonstration of this phenomenon ("Repetition of Composition," pp. 376–79).
80. *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cat. no. 147 (reproduced pp. 266–67). The manuscript was also displayed in 1931 (no. 546 B).
81. By reviewer Kenneth Baker (*Connoisseur* 219 [September 1989]: 128–33).
82. Christopher Knight, "Taking a Modern Look at a 'Princely Vision': Timur's Persian Art Invades LACMA," *Herald Examiner* (Los Angeles), 17 September 1989.
83. This hope was reflected in the comments of Iranian-Americans who visited the show; see Daryl H. Miller, "Through the Past Princely: Warlord's Vision Opens Door to 15th-century Persian Art," *Daily News* (Los Angeles) L.A. Life, 13 August 1989.

Encyclopedic Encounters:

A Review Article

ABSTRACT

This review article focuses on issues of balance in topic and area coverage as well as concerns of internal intellectual conceptualization and search/cross-reference apparatus in an ambitious encyclopedia project. The aim is to highlight features of broad relevance to the success of such publications generally, while simultaneously guiding the user of this particular reference work both to its exemplary positive attributes and to its serious limitations.

The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East. Edited by Eric M. Meyers, with William G. Dever, Carol L. Meyers, James D. Muhly, Dennis Pardee, and James A. Sauer. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Five volumes. 2,592 pages, 415 halftones, 220 line drawings, 30 maps. \$595.00.

IN AN ERA OF rampant explosion of knowledge and media technology, contested disciplinary strategies, and hot historiographic debates, a printed encyclopedia of the archaeology of the Near East with comprehensive and definitive aims risks seeming anachronistic if not quaint, dangerous if not doomed from its inception. That having been said, this reviewer does not shun as obsolete the book format *per se* or even the notion of a compendium of information fixed at a specified date of authorship according to a transparent set of intellectual goals. Such publications retain a definite potential value as learned overviews and points of departure for interested laypersons, students, and scholars who are not specialists in the particular matters on which they seek background or factual information.

The responsibility of reviewing an encyclopedia is great. Such an endeavor represents so much work by so many talented people that evenhandedness is especially important. So many organizational, financial, and political minefields have surely been tiptoed around in order to achieve the eventual product that sympathetic respect is essential. Yet to mask problems would be to shirk a duty to users who, in the very act of consulting an encyclopedia, are assuming a position of theoretical vulnerability to the publication's idiosyncracies far more pronounced than would be those same individuals' vulnerability as users of a modern scholarly monograph, from which they would presumably expect a discursive stance rather than a balanced collection of information. Considering these things, I come to the review process with a dual aim: to comment on strengths and weaknesses of a particular encyclopedia, as these factors may be most relevant to the *Ars Orientalis* readership, and simultaneously to discuss issues that must arise in evaluating any encyclopedia enterprise. I shall begin with a general characterization of main features of the contents, then move into highly selective cri-

tiques dealing with substantive and mechanical issues of access as well as with problems of omission. While I shall refer to some entries as examples of issues about the encyclopedia as a project, I shall not critique individual contributions in the sense of offering detailed alternative analyses, corrections, or expansions.

The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East (hereafter OEANE) joins the ranks as a worthy publication in its genre, bursting with useful and sometimes particularly smart syntheses dealing with cultures from prehistory through the era of the Crusades. It offers information via 1,125 alphabetically arranged entries by over 550 specialists from more than twenty-four countries. Each entry includes a bibliography of selected works for further reading. While all the entries are written in or translated into English, their bibliographies are not (thankfully) limited to English-language works. Furthermore the commendable ethos guiding the bibliographies seems to have been to allow each author full range in listing specialized sources—not just easy-reading survey literature. The main categories of entries are site reports, theories and methods in fieldwork and artifact analysis, natural and cultural manifestations (linguistic, intellectual, and material), issue-oriented pieces, biographies of major figures in the fields embraced by the mandate of the OEANE, a number of institutional histories of, for instance, relevant learned societies, and surveys of resources for further research. The entirety may be viewed thematically in a Synoptic Outline of Contents (at the end of vol. 5) that lists every entry under a designated category. A general index offers another point of access to the contents. Of the three appendices, the first is an impressive if anomalous eighteen-page tabulation of discovery, provenience, publication history, and related data on known Egyptian Aramaic texts—supplementing the entry “Egyptian Aramaic Texts.” The second and third appendices are more expected: a chronological outline and timeline (which in effect supplements an issue-oriented entry, “Periodization”), followed by a series of thirteen maps meant primarily to locate all sites receiving entries in the encyclopedia. These maps are supplemented by maps contained in some individual entries, which may display additional or different topographical details, sites, and regional

coverage. Finally, a twenty-page alphabetical Directory of Contributors gives titles and institutions (but not addresses) of all authors and lists their articles in the OEANE.

Approximately 450 discrete site accounts encompass a wide spectrum of archaeological fieldwork from North and East Africa, Cyprus, Crete and the Aegean Islands, the Arabian Peninsula, and Western Asia. The collection in one publication of site reports (many written by the excavators themselves) relating to the specified geographical and temporal purview of the OEANE is, in itself, unique. Concerns that I shall air below about balance in area representation compromise somewhat but do not fatally flaw this majestic project. The site entries as a rule take documentation through all eras manifested. This offers an important antidote to the impression a non-specialist so often receives from survey texts (and from period-naming conventions in Near Eastern archaeology based upon type-sites such as Uruk): to wit, that a given site famous in a certain high-profile period of *floruit* had no significant history in preceding or succeeding eras. At a time when scholars working with the histories of excavated artifacts are increasingly probing issues of continuities and discontinuities, afterlives and new ideological empowerments of old phenomena in new contexts, these site reports offer an expansive opportunity for contemplation.

Commentaries in some of the site entries were already superseded by the year of the OEANE's publication because ongoing excavation and/or more recently completed and published interpretive work seriously altered perspectives they provide. This is an inescapable fact of life for any large-scale encyclopedia enterprise—especially one dealing with so much fluid material. It is also an inescapable issue if a site report is to have any interpretive grist. I for one would not urge that the ideal encyclopedia site report be purged of overarching interpretive speculations on the significance of the record in order to minimize datedness later on. Rather it is preferable for site entries explicitly to clarify what issues may be among the most open to differing interpretations as work progresses (or as differing political stances in historiographical debate shift onto center stage). As a whole, the site entries in the OEANE are excellent, with many living up to this standard of inter-

pretive clarity. I do wish, however, that each entry bore the date of its submission (or final revision, as relevant). This would have been a special kindness to young scholars, some of whose work is not cited at all even though it had appeared in press or had lively currency among scholars as a dissertation-in-progress before the publication date of the OEANE.

Although some site entries receive illustrations that add significantly to the texts while others do not, I cannot regard this as a serious negative in a printed compendium of this scope and level of referencing to further resources. In numerous cases illustrations provided in site entries are also of particular interest to the themes of special topic entries. Here one misses systematic cross-referencing, which could have spread the value of these images more widely (see below).

Moving on from site reports, the reader also discovers numerous entries on topics in theory and method (e.g., "Ethnoarchaeology," "New Archaeology," "Survey, Archaeological") and documentary and analytical techniques (e.g., "Dating Techniques" and provenience techniques such as "Neutron Activation Analysis"). These articles are universally relevant and provide an important resource for any scholar of material culture working either within or outside the geographical boundaries of coverage of the OEANE. These contributions will be welcome precisely because they provide such solid entrees into technical aspects of archaeological fieldwork and materials analysis that are of profound significance to the art historian who may, however, not already be rooted in archaeological training. Much of the cutting-edge work in these areas has had its genesis in Near Eastern field contexts. Thus the OEANE presentations speak with particular authority.

Of the essays on specific natural and cultural phenomena across time and place (e.g., "Camels," "Gardens," "Olives," "Building Materials and Technologies," "Fortifications," "Semitic Languages"), some are superb contributions—whether written by a single author or by a team of scholars addressing sequential time periods. Without dwelling on minor criticisms of detail, many of the accounts pertaining to specific features of material culture are extremely impressive *tours de force* of broad but substantive synthesis. The collection is particularly strong on

architectural phenomena, with entries on a wide range of predictable categories as well as some that are less common and quite refreshing (such as "Roads" and "Stables"). Another key feature is the series of contributions on languages and culture groups. Indeed some of these are exemplary in the genre of topic-oriented contribution. As with the site reports, what distinguishes the best of these is their combination of thorough overview with serious attention to key issues of interpretation that give the reader clear access to selected currents of intellectual debate within the field. "Semitic Languages," for instance, moves from the earliest manifestations to modern Arabic in a masterful single-author overview; but it also offers one model (clearly explained *as* a model, not a definitive narrative) for understanding aspects of the origin, differentiation, and diffusion of these languages. Also paradigmatic is "Sumerians," in which basic material is enhanced by an articulate explanation of historiographic issues presented by the term *Sumerian* as a linguistic and cultural (ethnic) descriptor.

This discussion in "Sumerians" ultimately relates to a larger discourse on constructions of ethnicity (ancient and modern) and academic debates about theory and method in an archaeology of ethnicity. Unfortunately, these matters are not foregrounded in the OEANE. In fact, ethnicity does not even appear in the index, much less does it have an entry devoted to it. The topic is of such obvious significance to the archaeology of the Near East that its omission is baffling. (Lest there be any misunderstanding, "Ethnoarchaeology," which does receive a very useful entry, is not about the study of ethnicity.) The lacuna is particularly striking because there are a number of punchy essays on similar hot issue-oriented topics (such as "Ideology and Archaeology," "Nationalism and Archaeology") as well as those on theory and method. "Ethnicity" seems an inescapable member of this roster of contributions—a roster in which the editorship justifiably takes great pride (vol. 1, pp. xiv–xv). In the absence of such an essay, special attention should have been paid to indexing discussions embedded in existing contributions (e.g., "Names and Naming," "Sumerians," and others).

A similar omission that is difficult to fathom is the complete opacity of topic referencing to gender

studies, women's studies, or feminist studies. An entry on issues in any one of these areas as it relates to the archaeology of the Near East would have been extremely valuable. As with the discourse on ethnicity, there is a tremendous amount of work to draw upon. In the absence of a full-blown entry, some attempt at indexing should have been made. Keywords such as *birthing*, *childbirth*, *conception*, *female*, *feminism/feminist*, *fertility*, *gender*, *genitalia* (and specific items of same), *intercourse*, *sex*, and *woman* simply do not occur in the index. A solitary index citation under "Fertility figurines" leads the reader to the "Ain Ghazal" site entry. There are certainly numerous allusions to fertility figures and so on (e.g., at "Çatal Höyük") and many allusions to issues of gender studies or representations of females within socially determining contexts (e.g., at "Catacombs" in the discussion of the Beth-She'arim catacombs, and at "Seals" in relation to women at work on early Mesopotamian cylinder seals). But the isolated direction to "Ain Ghazal" is as close as we come to a reference in the finding apparatus explicitly denoting any issues of sexuality and gender identification or feminist/gender theory.

It will be clear by now that the index of the OEANE ill serves the scholarly contributors to and the users of this work. Many items do not appear at all in the index even though mentioned frequently in contributions. Other items are only *partially* indexed, which is in a way even more misleading than a total absence of indexing since it suggests that a complete and systematic word search yielded almost nothing.

Despite many high points, the topic essays are mixed in quality and seem to lack editorial vetting both to ensure homogeneity in chronological/cultural range of material covered and to monitor general quality/audience pitch. To take but two examples for comparison: "Glass" provides a solid and engaging general survey of a range of evidence across time and place. But "Seals" is surprisingly limited, veritably fading out with the fall of the Assyrians and even omitting adequate introduction of contemporaneous material on Urartian, Neo-Babylonian, and Neo-Elamite traditions. We receive *no* representation of (or cross-referencing to other more general culture entries for) Achaemenid Persian, Hellenistic,

Parthian, Sasanian, Byzantine, and Islamic glyptic traditions whatsoever. Beyond the question of historical coverage, many issues in seal analysis directly pertinent to the larger project of the OEANE as an encyclopedia of archaeology are left largely unproblematic here. Most critically, issues of retrieval and analytical potentials of seal impressions in excavated archival contexts are not featured. And although allusions to such matters appear in a variety of other entries (e.g., “Moza” and “Libraries and Archives”), these are not systematically cross-referenced in “Seals.” Thus the reader of the topic essay receives only occasional direction to specific entries that would greatly enhance treatment of the topic at hand. This is frequently the case even when other entries give illustrations and analytical consideration to the topic. As but one of many examples, ancient impressions of Egyptian cylinder seals from ‘Ein-Besor receive a drawing in that site report, but “Seals” does not refer the reader there. This is especially unfortunate since “Seals” does mention that early Mesopotamian cylinder seals have been found in Egypt but does not note that Egyptian-made cylinders were produced in response to this stimulus.

In fact, there is a general tendency for relevant site reports to receive no cross-referencing in contributions on topics. In “Glass,” for instance, the entry for the shipwreck of Serçe Limani, with its illustrated cache of Islamic glass vessels from a dated and extremely informative archaeological context, is not cross-referenced. As but one other example, “Libraries and Archives” discusses the storage system at Sippar without cross-referencing the entry “Sippar,” which actually includes a terrific photograph of the library, with its pigeon-hole files. For many topics it might be too cumbersome to cross-reference *all* relevant entries. But editorial discretion in seeking some representative system, backed up by the topic authors’ suggestions based upon a list of stand-out sites to be documented by entries, would have been most valuable generally—and particularly for the less comprehensive discussions. Such matters fall within the admittedly mind-boggling range of onerous and possibly thankless editorial responsibility in an encyclopedia project.

The array of topic essays is rich, as can be seen by a quick perusal of the Synoptic Outline. I have

not infrequently been disappointed, however, when trying to use the OEANE as an overview resource on specific items that I was sure would have dedicated entries. In some of these cases the disjunctures between my expectations and the availability of certain entry topics simply reflect a valid difference in hierarchy of interest—a difference that I, as a now-veteran user, have internalized. But in other cases, an omission seems impossible to rationalize. Note, for instance, the absence of an entry on the date palm analogous to “Olives” or an entry on lapis lazuli analogous to “Bone, Ivory, and Shell.” That having been said, I have often happily stumbled upon interesting material that I wasn’t actually seeking. In this category, “Medicine” comes to mind as an extremely rewarding essay.

The sometimes baffling and frustrating (but apparently unmotivated) exclusions of certain key topics is exacerbated by an imbalance in geographical coverage that is so pervasive as to be provocative. Coverage of specific topics and specific sites pertaining to Syro-Palestinian archaeology is much denser than for other areas. One comparison serves to illustrate the problem. “Four-Room House” (a distinguishing feature of domestic architecture in ancient Israel) receives an extensive entry separate from the coverage of domestic architecture in ancient Israel subsumed under “House, Syro-Palestinian.” In stark contrast, there is no entry at all for foundation deposits. Foundation deposits were so culturally charged and are so archaeologically significant in ancient Western Asia, and particularly in Mesopotamia, that it would be difficult to justify omission of the topic from the OEANE in any circumstance; but it is especially difficult in the face of the number of pages collectively devoted to Syro-Palestinian house forms.

Concerning site coverage, it is true that many more sites in Israel have been excavated in the late twentieth century than in Iran, for instance. But in the OEANE many sites of relatively lesser significance in Syria-Palestine are awarded discrete entries, while many truly major sites in Iran receive no entries whatsoever even though they bring specific and extremely important types of material to bear on the archaeology of the Near East in the periods embraced by the OEANE. Puzzling omissions include Shahr-i Sokhta, Tepe Nush-i Jan, Qasr-i Abu Nasr, Nisa, and

Bishapur, to list only a very few from various periods. Of these, only Nush-i Jan and Shahr-i Sokhta even appear in the index—however haphazardly in the case of the latter. (Shahr-i Sokhta is indexed to “Persia” but not to “Camels,” where it also figures importantly.)

One gains a sense of the relative poverty of the OEANE’s investment in the Iranian material by examining the solitary appendix map of “Mesopotamia and Persia” in vol. 5, p. 425, and then comparing it with the extensive appendix mappings of sites in the Syria-Palestine region. “Mesopotamia and Persia” stops at the western edge of Kerman and Khorassan, completely eliminating the crucial regions around and just beyond the Indus and Oxus rivers. In this way the site of Shahr-i Sokhta, in Sistan, drops off the radar screen completely despite the fact that it is mentioned substantively in at least two entries. This ahistorical truncation of boundaries of experience is most unfortunate in the context of an endeavor that intends to give conceptual access to the interconnectedness of areas of the Near East and access historically to the Near Eastern realms of crucial importance to late antique and early medieval civilizations.

Choices made in designating the 141 major figures in the field to receive biographies reveal a similar imbalance in coverage, with the omission of giants such as Ernst Herzfeld and Sir Aurel Stein seeming once again to reflect the relative weakness of attention to the eastern reaches. This imbalance has a detrimental effect on a set of entries intended to assist the reader to gain access to additional resources (e.g., “Periodical Literature,” “Reference Works”). These entries are a wonderful idea, but they mimic the heavy weighting toward Biblical studies and the weakness in Iran and points east. Note, for instance, the glaring omission from the roster of “Technical Journals” of, e.g., *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, *Iran*, and *Iranica Antiqua*, as well as *Ars Orientalis* and *Res Orientales*. The listing of the *American Journal of Archaeology* under Classical and Mediterranean archaeology but not under Near Eastern archaeology must be, instead, symptomatic of the tendency for editorial lapses in critical oversight of the goals of specific tools. The tragic result in this instance is, of course, to suggest to the generalist anglophone user that the *AJA* (the scholarly organ of

the Archaeological Institute of America) is not a resource in Near Eastern archaeology. The “Reference Works” entry has some extremely useful annotations of cited publications. But here again, there are perplexing omissions. Most surprisingly, there is no category for reference sources of any genre to cover material not cited under the rubric New Testament (Greco-Roman) World. What happened to the so-called Byzantine and Islamic Worlds? Under Bible atlases (the only pre-Hellenistic rubric for the genre) the Baines and Málek *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (1980) in the Facts on File series is listed, while Roaf’s (1990) *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East* in the same series is not—despite the fact that Beck’s (1962) *Atlas of Mesopotamia* is cited, but with an annotation warning that it is somewhat dated. Under the category of primary sources in translation for the Ancient Near Eastern World, Pritchard’s 1955 collection is the only one representing texts of the Greater Mesopotamian tradition. The annotation here noting problems of readability and datedness makes especially frustrating the omission of a selection from the numerous English renderings at least of important official or literary genres of texts from the Sumerian hymns and the Epic of Gilgamesh through the Neo-Assyrian annals to the Old Persian royal inscriptions. Other serious omissions occur in the category called Archaeological Dictionaries. The *Reallexikon für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* should be listed here parallel to the inclusion in the New Testament (Greco-Roman) World section of Pauly and Wissowa’s *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (plus the more recent *Kleine Pauly*). The *Assyrian Dictionary* and *The Hittite Dictionary*, both of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, would be other important additions, among others.

The example of the Silk Route is telling in regard to opacities of information retrieval on important topics. Although it does not (alas) receive an essay in the OEANE, it is at least indexed under that term, leading the user to two separate region entries (“Diayala,” with its succinct statement of where and what the Silk Route is, and the informative article on the “Hamrin Dam Salvage Project,” which makes passing reference to it). An interesting discussion of aspects of the silk trade (and by implication, if not

conventional name, also the Silk Route) does occur in “Sasanians” (vol. 4, p. 494). The discussion is traceable in the index as “Sasanians, trade,” but the indexing of “silk” omits this citation, referring the reader only to the mention of silk as a material in “Textiles.” There is, furthermore, no index citation under “Sasanians, silk.” The indexing of “Trade, Far Eastern” refers the reader to a solitary entry: the site report “Terqa,” which notes that cloves discovered there in a second-millennium B.C.E. context are the earliest attestation available to date of Western Asiatic trade with the Far East (vol. 4, p. 190). The long and short of it is that a novice user interested in learning about issues of trade and cultural links between Western Asia and Central/East Asia will have a real challenge. Those who don’t know enough to realize that “silk” is the keyword needed to crack the indexing of this topic will not reach the indexing of Silk Route and thence at least get to “Diyala.” If such users also lack the knowledge base to think of checking “Sasanians,” they will miss the index clues under “Sasanians, trade,” not to mention “Trade, Sasanians.” Perhaps having first tried “Trade, Far Eastern” and found second-millennium acorns but nothing further, they will assume that additional information on this topic is simply not to be found in the OEANE. Nor will novice users be helped by the Synoptic Outline, since “silk” has no entry of its own.

The Synoptic Outline is a great idea, and it is often very useful. But, paradoxically, for areas in which the OEANE’s topic or site coverage is weak or conceptually problematic, its authority becomes subversive. The meager listing of site entries under “Persia” in the Outline creates an impression of minimal archaeological activity in this large region. This mistaken impression is compounded by the problematic way in which the OEANE has chosen to deal with the implications of empire. “Persia” under the rule of the Achaemenid dynasty was, after all, the heartland of a vast multicultural empire that stretched from the areas of the Oxus and Indus rivers across Egypt into Libya. Many sites of great significance to our understanding of the archaeology of this empire and thence of the entire Near East at this time are situated within the borders of modern nations other than Iran. It is, however, difficult for the nonspecialist to glean the importance of wide-ranging sites to the

Achaemenid Persian enterprise through the Synoptic Outline apparatus. Chronological categories structuring site listings in some of the major relevant non-Iranian regions bury the 200-year Achaemenid Persian hegemony within rubrics that erase the imperial experience (e.g., Ancient Mesopotamia is followed by Mesopotamia from Alexander to the Rise of Islam; and a similar construct is used for Anatolia). Interestingly, this is not the framework used for sites in Syria-Palestine. Here the Outline does acknowledge hegemonic overlays by creating the category “Persian through Roman Periods.”

The haphazard approach to articulation of factors of empire is most blatantly seen in the Synoptic Outline at the end of the entire sequence of entry listings under “Lands and Peoples.” Here (vol. 5, p. 456), under a subcategory called “Major Empires,” we find, e.g., “Hyksos” but not “Assyrian,” “Alexandrian” but not “Achaemenid,” “Roman” but not “Sasanian.” No overview entry on “Empire” or on the “Archaeology of Empire” defines a construction of empire upon which inclusion or exclusion in this roster could possibly have been based and could thus be fathomed if not agreed with. Allusions to missing empires are embedded within overview essays on “Assyrians,” “Persians,” “Sasanians,” etc., and frequent reference to these empires is made in site reports sprinkled throughout the encyclopedia. But this makes it all the more puzzling that the notion of empire and its archaeology is not picked out rationally in the conceptual hierarchy of the OEANE project as a phenomenon of the Near Eastern environment predating Alexander (with the mystifying exception of the Hyksos). It is especially puzzling since much important and accessible documentary and theoretical work has been done in empire studies in the pre-Alexander Near East, not least precisely in the area of the archaeology of empire. References that do occur in various comprehensive site reports to, for example, the “Persian empire” or the “Achaemenid empire” are not indexed.

It is now time to contextualize the imbalances in coverage and the often frustrating apparatus of the OEANE. I have saved this discussion for the end. But the *first* thing a real-life user of the OEANE must do to establish a productive working relationship with this encyclopedia is to grasp its perceived and realized intellectual identity and the niche in coverage it

really aims to fill. These features are not self-evident from the title of the work. They reflect a long gestational history. At issue on a basic level are the operative definitions of “the Near East” and of “archaeology.” The interesting and candid preface by Eric Meyers is essential reading. It explains that the project was first conceived in 1988 as a one-volume handbook of Biblical archaeology sponsored by the American Schools of Oriental Research. It eventually evolved into a project of far broader intellectual ambition and geographical/temporal scope. This evolution seems to have occurred in at least two stages. First, the project moved from a single-volume handbook on Biblical archaeology to a multivolume encyclopedia project, still aiming to focus on Syria-Palestine. An important part of this stage in the rethinking was a major and impressively realized commitment to create a vehicle that would bring together in one unified publication the work of archaeologists from the politically estranged modern nations sharing stewardship of the Syro-Palestinian archaeological heritage.

The eventual shift to embrace “the archaeology of the entire Near East” seems to reflect a second (and probably quite late) stage in the project’s evolution. If the larger ambition was superimposed upon a series of entries that had already been commissioned and a concept that was already deeply entrenched, this would explain if not excuse some of the concerns raised in my review. The original Biblical-oriented parameters of the project remain strongly manifest in various ways—from coverage imbalance to oddities of framing of thematic and temporal categories in, for instance, “Reference Works.” Meyers acknowledges that Syria-Palestine “remains very much at the core of these volumes,” but he may be uncharacteristically disingenuous when he rationalizes this as “largely the result of the fact that there has been more historic interest and consequently more field-work in that area” as well as a reflection of difficulty in access to Iran and Iraq by Westerners (p. xi).

Although the preface does not specifically address this, archaeology as concept and practice represented in the OEANE is primarily defined by field-

work and its closest handmaidens in the interpretation of stratigraphy (e.g., ceramics analysis and the delineation of architectural features); by theories and methods of information retrieval from the field; by documentation and basic material/artifact analysis; and by a recognition that these exercises are at once informed by and meant further to inform humanistic engagements with culture and history in a larger sense. In the realm of the material record there is much more emphasis here upon manifestations of the culture of “daily life” than upon issues in visual analysis and the interpretation of visual culture. As long as the reader appreciates this operative framework, understanding that it perforce marginalizes a range of interpretive strategies of art history that are crucial to the larger intellectual endeavor of inferring meaning from the retrieved record, then the focus is certainly legitimate. I would like to have had this issue of disciplinary range acknowledged in the preface, however briefly. And I would like to have seen some exploration of at least a few key topics in visual analysis of particular relevance—including semiotics, for instance—as pendants to the numerous entries on issues, theories and methods in field archaeology, and technical materials analysis.

Given the pressures that must have haunted this endeavor as its mandate changed and expanded, one must in the end be sympathetic and grateful that the OEANE was brought to fruition at all—shortcomings notwithstanding. But Oxford University Press owes it to contributors and users to take one step in damage control. It should provide over the Internet a proper index for this encyclopedia—one that at minimum works off a well-considered list of keywords, searched mechanically through the entire text. This would dramatically improve the value of the OEANE as the reference work it is intended to be. My encyclopedic encounter makes one thing quite clear: rich syntheses with broadly informed, allusive insights on important topics that have not themselves received discrete entries are not much use in a 2,592-page book if you have no way to find them short of reading from A to Z.

Book Reviews

Porcelain Stories: From China to Europe. By Julie Emerson, Jennifer Chen, and Mimi Gardner Gates. 319 pp., illustrations. Seattle: Seattle Art Museum in association with University of Washington Press, 2000. \$50.00

PORCELAIN STORIES is the right book at the right time. It offers a lucid and scholarly retelling of the history of porcelain East and West, plus some valuable new insights into the subject. It is rare to find the complex international story of porcelain so successfully interwoven in a single volume. The Seattle Art Museum publication appears when popular interest in ceramics is on the rise, attested to by the recent release of a novel devoted to Europe's quest to make porcelain.¹ Now with *Porcelain Stories*, the interested reader and undergraduate alike have a reliable source to discover porcelain's world significance as one of the most valued economic commodities and a vehicle that transmitted artistic motifs around the globe.

Porcelain Stories belongs to a relatively new—and highly valuable—category of publications that integrates the format of a lavishly illustrated museum catalogue with book-style chapters. The resulting volume has a sustained life independent of an exhibition. Information is presented logically, starting with chapter one, which introduces China's first porcelain and then Europe's earliest attempts. Subsequently, in keeping with the complex development of world trade, discussion within the chapters moves back and forth across China, other Asian countries, the Middle East, and Europe. Some cultures are so shortchanged—Thailand, for example—that the discussion might more profitably have been eliminated (p. 92), but coverage between East and West is beautifully balanced. The book ends at the dawn of the nineteenth century, when the “European Age of Porcelain” draws to a close due to the introduction of mechanization and low-cost ceramics (p. 267). In China, porcelain also began a steep decline, with decreased imperial patronage and festering political instability absorbing the country's attention.

The book begins by introducing Chinese ceramic

stoneware, the history and technology of which are inextricably linked to porcelain's development. Their relationship is so close that Chinese scholars use the word *ci*, or “porcelain,” to refer to both stoneware and porcelain, while Westerners have a more restrictive definition of the latter. The authors of *Porcelain Stories* perceptively note that the European notion of porcelain versus stoneware “seems to be that of the beholder emphasizing the visual difference” and the Chinese notion “that of the maker recognizing the technical similarity” (p. 17). Following Western taxonomy, the authors define porcelain as a high-fired, white-bodied ceramic ware of hard, dense texture that is impermeable to liquid, translucent when thin, and resonant when struck. Its debut on the world stage was “around A.D. 600” (p. 15).

In a carefully written, succinct treatment of early celadon stoneware that sets the stage for the rise of porcelain, the authors make one lamentable choice. They refer to south China's Yue stoneware as “green-glazed ware” (p. 17 and elsewhere) instead of using the somewhat arcane and poetic word *celadon*, which better captures the ineffable color of Yue ware that belongs in the blue-green spectrum, including shades of yellowish gray-green. The terminology is also problematic because, later in *Porcelain Stories*, blue-green Longquan stoneware is described as “celadon”; but since Yue and Longquan wares belong to the same large ceramic family, they should be described with the same label.

The text moves from stoneware to the invention of porcelain at northern Chinese kilns. In a nice touch, Xing and Ding wares are referred to as the “name brands” that broke the supremacy and popularity of Yue ware (p. 19). Trade, economic competition, and aesthetic exchanges are a frequent leitmotif in this book, and these issues are discussed cogently in terms of southern Yue ware's influence on the development of northern porcelain in the Tang dynasty (618–907). Later, reverse influences from north to south are addressed. Ultimately it was the southern Chinese kiln site of Jingdezhen in Jiangxi Province that emerged as the porcelain capital of the world.

With unfailing clarity throughout the book, the authors interweave technical analysis with discussion of its attendant aesthetic results. To appreciate porcelain, it is necessary to understand the mineralogical

content of clays and glazes and to become knowledgeable about various practices of loading, fueling, and firing a kiln. These factors directly account for the distinctive appearances of porcelains made in different places and at different times. The authors are careful to apply technological analysis to both Chinese and European wares in a manner that does not burden a newcomer to the subject.

Early in the book, kaolin and porcelain stone, the chief ingredients for making porcelain, are introduced. Kaolin (low silica and high alumina content) predominated in north China, while porcelain stone with inverse proportions of silica and alumina was favored in the south. Kaolin is much more plastic and produces a compact body that is strong and suitable for intricate shapes. Porcelain stone is far less elastic but yields a wondrous glassy, somewhat sugary texture. A major breakthrough occurred when the potters at Jingdezhen in the late Song dynasty (960–1279) began to mine local deposits of both kaolin and porcelain stone and combined them in a new compound clay. When fired to a temperature around 1300° C, this new two-ingredient clay is strong enough to produce large, elaborate vessels that sparkle with snow-white brilliance. While *Porcelain Stories* devotes the greatest discussion to the dominance of Jingdezhen's porcelain and its impact on ceramic traditions worldwide, other competing porcelains such as Dehua wares are also covered (chap. 12).

A great variety of artistic schema were developed over a span of several dynasties at Jingdezhen. Each of the major types is discussed, including the early jadelike, blue-white glaze called *qingbai* and the later development of chromatically richer monochrome glazes. Traditions of overglaze enamel painting are also addressed. Special attention is rightfully dedicated to the advent of blue-and-white decoration, which features designs painted in a solution of cobalt oxide beneath a clear glaze. Evolving in the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), blue-and-white ware owes a strong debt to Islamic artistic influences, and it went on to have profound international consequences. Enjoyed domestically, especially at the Chinese court, blue-and-white porcelains were also traded in volume to the Middle East, southeast Asia, and Japan; and eventually they attracted the attention of the European elite.

Once the Europeans knew about porcelain (the earliest documented piece there dates to about 1300), they were so besotted with it that they were willing to believe it changed color in contact with poison (p. 24). From the time ships began to navigate around the Cape of Good Hope in 1499, porcelain began to be imported in ever greater quantities. In the first half of the seventeenth century, three million pieces reached Europe from China (p. 102), earning for porcelain the name “white gold.” The roles of Portuguese and Spanish traders are briefly examined, while excellent in-depth treatment is given to the spectacular dominance of the Dutch East India Company, or VOC, in importing porcelain to Europe. Popular Kraak blue-and-white wares—seventeenth-century Chinese wares named for the European vessels that transported them—are sensitively analyzed as one example of porcelain's importance in international artistic exchange. The compartmentalized border panels typical on this ware were influenced by Islamic art; thus its popularity in Europe introduced motifs from both China and the Middle East (p. 103).

The European vogue for porcelain reached a crescendo in the early eighteenth century when fashionable rooms were crammed with imported Chinese and Japanese ceramics set out on “fireplace surrounds, on cornices above doorways, and on specially designed wall brackets” (p. 137). *Porcelain Stories* devotes good coverage to these rooms and the advent of a cult of Orientalism.

Despite many efforts to find the secret for making porcelain, it was not until 1710 that true porcelain was first created in Europe at Meissen. Augustus the Strong (1670–1733), who deeply bled his treasury to import porcelain, was desperate to find its secret formula, or arcanum. He sponsored a combination of scientific and alchemical experiments, which finally proved successful under the lead of the alchemist Böttger, who had been imprisoned for years by Augustus until he produced the yearned-for result. Soon after porcelain's discovery, the style of Chinoiserie developed as a way for Europeans to “evoke the allure of Asia” in decorating their own porcelains (p. 194). By the 1740s Meissen's secret had leaked to other kilns, ushering in an age of European competition in porcelain production and a decrease in Asian imports.

Porcelain Stories is equipped with a useful glossary and an appendix that provides a detailed discussion of porcelain manufacture at Jingdezhen. The book would also have benefited from a list of Chinese characters and a few more endnotes supplying references to specific excavation reports, but these complaints are minor. Most of the extended plate captions are well researched and flow well into the chapter text, but sometimes they are not convincing. For example, a mortuary jar that bears appliques of the animals of the four cardinal directions and a tower-shaped finial is cited for the unusual inclusion of an empty chair in the decoration. The miniature chair is touted as a sign of the "new trend or fashion" for chairs in daily living in the Song dynasty (p. 50). This overlooks the history of chairs as seats for rulers and deities, whose inferred presence might more logically be assumed, especially given the elaborate, pagodalike appearance of the tower.

Porcelain Studies is a comprehensive, authoritative, and well-written history of porcelain. It is the best reference of its kind, one that beginners and professionals will both happily consult for some time to come.

NOTE

1. Janet Gleeson, *The Arcanum: The Extraordinary True Story* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1998).

JAN STUART

Devi: The Great Goddess: Female Divinity in South Asian Art. Edited by Vidya Dehejia. 408 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution in association with Mapin Publishing, Ahmedabad, and Prestel Verlag, Munich, 1999. \$85.00.

D *EVI: THE GREAT GODDESS: Female Divinity in South Asian Art* is both an exhibition catalogue and a series of related explanatory essays. The exhibition, celebrating the Hindu goddess in her myriad and complex forms, was orga-

nized by the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., in 1999. The book portrays the nurturing, terrifying, beneficent, creative, and destructive aspects of Mahādevī ("The Great Goddess") in all her divine intricacy and splendor.

As befitting a major exhibition, the catalogue is sumptuously illustrated with the 119 images from the exhibition, as well as illustrative material such as maps and site photographs. The catalogue illustrations are each accompanied by detailed caption explanations that refer to the essays in the first half of the book.

Rather than focus on a narrow art-historical interpretation of goddess imagery, Vidya Dehejia, Chief Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and editor of *Devi*, has chosen to expand the usual format of an exhibition catalogue to include a series of interrelated exegetical essays. These essays explore the subject of goddess worship through such disciplines as architectural history, literature, anthropology, religious studies, and social criticism, as well the more traditional art-historical perspective.

Presumably such a book, which is both exhibition catalogue and related essays, is aimed at a general audience of knowledgeable but nonspecialist readers with a more than casual interest in Hindu art, the type of person who would have been drawn to the exhibition. In this regard the book is often successful, offering clearly written scholarly essays that are immensely useful to a broader understanding of the historical and social context of the art and architecture associated with the goddess. The book also has a few flaws; one essay that attempts to portray a difficult subject in a noncontroversial format fails in its purpose, and another essay obscures an interesting subject by adopting an overly abstruse approach.

In her introductory essay Dehejia points out that imagery of Devī is omnipresent in the life of South Asia as the nurturing (rather than childbearing) mother of all. Dehejia's brief historical overview of goddess imagery puts the immense history of Devī's cult into context with the rest of Hinduism. She points out that, after playing a seemingly dominant role in Harappān culture, as evidenced by numerous terracotta sculptures, goddesses went into eclipse until reemerging in sculptural form in the second century A.D. By the sixth century Devī had made a

triumphant reentry into Indian society, as implicit in the *Devī Māhātmya*, which glorifies the goddess and her worship. Contemporary Hinduism continues to create and accept new forms of the goddess, such as Vaiśṇo Devī or Santoṣī Mā. Devī's many manifestations are perceived to be *ek hi hai*: all one.

Thomas Coburn's essay, "The Threefold Vision of the *Devī-Mahatmya*," puts the tradition of Devī worship into its scriptural context. He points out that in Indian art visual knowledge often presupposes a knowledge of narrative. Translated excerpts from the great fifth–sixth century A.D. text help viewers of the exhibition or the catalogue to understand the images of Devī in their poetic multiplicity.

In "Temples to the Goddess" George Michell provides a succinct overview of the variety of architecture associated with the goddess, from circular yoginī shrines unique to *śākta* architecture, to North Indian temples dedicated to one particular goddess, to goddess shrines that are subsidiary but essential parts of the large South Indian temple complexes. He explains that later temples are often linked to particular royal dynastic patronage, indicating that sovereigns often ruled under the aegis of their particular *śakti*.

Dennis Hudson's essay, "The Ritual Worship of Devī," offers insight into the priestly invocation that brings about the embodiment of the goddess in a stone or metal image. His essay on ritual is useful in a broad context, but it delves inadequately into areas of Tāntric worship and ritual, such as the South Indian Durgā-Koṭṭavai cult—areas of interrelated tribal and Sanskritized Tāntric worship that cannot be easily sanitized for popular consumption. It would have been far better simply to ignore such heterogeneous imagery as a subject too complicated for a text of this general nature rather than unequivocally to associate it with the *Devī Māhātmya* and to offer it as evidence of symbolic rather than actual blood letting. There is ample literary and inscriptional evidence from contemporary sources to suggest that the Pallavas, Colās, and later South Indian dynasties supported blood and head offerings to the goddess in more than symbolic form; to suggest otherwise may be more palatable to the modern reader but is not accurate.¹

In their essay on "Poetic Visions of the Great Goddess: Tamil Nadu and Bengal" Vidya Dehejia and Sangaree Sengupta first provide a brief history

of goddess-focused poetry, then highlight two distinct vernacular poetic traditions from the regions of Tamil Nadu and Bengal. The poetic works of the Tamil poet Subrahmanya Bharati create the image of the goddess as cosmic mother, while poetry by the Bengali poet Rām Prāsād makes use of irreverent whimsical puns and real-world images to evoke the contradictory nature of Kālī.

Terence McInerney writes in "Mysterious Origins: The Tantric Devī Series from Basohli" on the important early Punjab Hills painting series that illustrates the goddess in her often intentionally cryptic Tāntric forms. These paintings, executed between 1660 and 1670, are some of the earliest examples of Pahārī-style painting. Sixteen of the thirty-two remaining paintings of the series of seventy are color illustrated in the catalogue; the others, which were not included in the exhibition, are illustrated in black and white in an appendix. The reverse of each painting has an elliptical Sanskrit poem that describes the painting. While the undisputed genius of the Tāntric Devī Master from Basohli is evident, his identity remains a tantalizing mystery. The identity of a princely patron is surmised by the lavish use of costly materials such as gold and iridescent green beetle wing cases.

Cornelia Mallebrein in "Tribal and Local Deities: Assimilations and Transformations" examines the integration of village and tribal goddesses into the identity of Durgā and the parallel parochialization of Durgā into the "little" tradition. Mallebrein points out that often this religious union facilitated political integration of *deśī* (regional) cultures into the Sanskritized *mārgī* (mainstream) culture, allowing a smoother transformation and unity of different societies through the recognition of a local goddess.

Tapati Guha-Thakurta, in "Clothing the Goddess: The Modern Contest over Representations of Devī," writes eloquently about the politicized social issues surrounding the interpretation of the sensual and erotic in the portrayal of the divine female. She reflects on the process of transforming the sexual into the iconic. This debate has raged since the inception of Indian art history in the nineteenth century. Rāja Ravi Varma's voluptuous goddess paintings, modeled after real women, were much admired by the British and middle-class Indians for their realistic treatment of the female figure but were excoriated as

vulgar and obscene by Indian nationalist intellectuals. Guha-Thakurta makes it clear that the controversy over the appropriate understanding and portrayal of the goddess continues. Modern masters such as M. F. Hussain continue to generate passionate debate on issues of aesthetic freedom versus religious decorum. The recent argument over Hussain's depiction of a nude Sarasvati generated a national dispute about sensuality and religion. Ironically, Hussain's angular taut but nude goddess is accused of obscenity, while the sweetly pretty yet overtly sensual goddesses of calendar art are revered as the acceptable norm.

In her essay "Moving Devi" Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suffers from a dedication to the typical deconstructionist's delusion that arcane prolixity and peculiar personal rules of punctuation will edify her readers. Her essay, a word salad of astounding obscurata, cannot have offered enlightenment to anyone not familiar with deconstructionist critical theory. This reader confesses to an admiration for clear writing, and Spivak's orphic style seems to me a dissipation of purpose in a volume aimed at an educated general audience. Despite Spivak's convoluted style, it is evident that she has many compelling points to make about the duality and unity of the Devī and that her interpretive strategy and subalternist insistence on considering both the "high" and "low" texts provide a refreshing perspective. It is a pity that her love affair with surrealistic punctuation and a post-modernist English version of *sandhyā bhāṣā* makes her work largely inaccessible to a potentially interested audience.

Devi: The Great Goddess is a valuable resource providing a generous compendium of imagery and a useful variety of scholarly perspectives on current issues in Indian art history concerned with the goddess. It is to be hoped that future catalogues will routinely incorporate more than exhibition captions and will follow this same format.

NOTE

1. Mary Nancy Storm, "The Heroic Image: Self-Sacrificial Decapitation in the Art of India" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1999).

Saptamātrkā Worship and Sculptures: An Iconological Interpretation of Conflicts and Resolutions in the Storied Brāhmaṇical Icons. By Shivaji K. Panikkar. 301 pp., 196 black and white plates. New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1997. \$110.00.

SHIVAJI PANIKKAR'S book traces the rise and development of the Seven Mother Goddesses (Saptamātrkāḥ) in mythology and art, from the appearance of this group in the art of the late fourth or early fifth century through the ninth century, after which the theme declined in importance. Panikkar builds upon previous work on the subject by such scholars as Michael Meister¹ and Katherine Harper,² whom he acknowledges as important sources. Panikkar, however, criticizes these scholars on a methodological basis, claiming that they failed to do more than match image to text or trace iconography in terms of cultic affiliation, divorced from a wider historical and social context. Panikkar's more ambitious goal is to relate the historical development of iconography and myth formation to political, social, and economic power relations, specifically those between what he calls the patriarchal "*brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya* power nexus" and its nemeses, the lower classes and the female gender, which he sees this power nexus working to suppress through assimilation and appropriation. This explains the book's subtitle, *Conflicts and Resolutions*. The book is therefore simultaneously a survey of the iconographic development of a particular theme and a comment on Indian social and religious history in general, which has wider implications for the field of Indian art history. The result is intriguing, and in the main convincing, while leaving one wary of some of the generalities invoked.

The first six chapters are mainly chronological surveys of the material, while the seventh develops the author's major theses, which are presaged throughout the book. Chapter one is devoted to investigating prototypes of the Seven Mothers in the art of the Indus Valley culture and in the literature on goddesses and female heptads in the Vedic and immediate post-Vedic period, mainly through the Upaniṣads. The rise of śāktism and the Tāntric tradition are also discussed briefly, to be taken up in

more detail in chapter 3. Panikkar traces the ambivalence of the benign and malevolent aspects of the Seven Mothers to the Vedas and the roots of a female monism to the Upaniṣads. The enduring astrological and mythological importance of the number seven is explored. While even the most basic conclusions regarding the Indus Valley archaeological material should be only speculative, and connections with later Indian culture are tenuous at best, Panikkar lays the ground here for his later conclusions. The author's assumptions here follow what, in his introduction, he describes as a materialist, and also feminist, view of social history. After asserting (p. 11) that the evidence is "conclusive in ascertaining the prevalence of the ritual-bound worship of the divine female in the Indus Valley culture," he appears to agree with those of "the older viewpoint" who conclude that the people of the Indus Valley were matriarchal and "thus" worshipped primarily a mother goddess. This follows upon the assumptions that women invented agriculture (chap. 7, pp. 164–65) and would therefore have had superior social status and ritual prerogatives. The evidence from Indus Valley seals and sculpture seems to me to allow no such strong conclusions. Nor is it possible to say except by speculation that any one of these traits must follow naturally upon the other. Nevertheless, Panikkar assumes that the same social traits characterized all or virtually all non-Aryan societies in India, and throughout the book he implies that these would be the preferred forms of social structure and worship of the lower classes and of women (presumably of all classes). This risky strategy is both one of the main strengths and the main weakness of this book, since the aim is to provide a new context in which to view the art and cultic history of the subcontinent. The later chapters are more successful than the first in providing such a context.

Chapter 2 looks at prototypes of the Seven Mothers in the art of the Kuṣāṇa period, most importantly in imagery relating to the birth of Skanda and his adoptive ferocious mothers (who eventually become seven), as well as the related issue of the importance of *bālagraha* deities (spirits involved in the conception, birth, diseases, and protection of children) in the formation of the general artistic motif of the mother and child. Panikkar insists here (in a major

departure from Harper and others) that, notwithstanding the visual and mythological influence of the prototypes, the Purāṇic conception of the Seven Mother Goddesses of Gupta and post-Gupta times is fundamentally different from the seven mothers of Skanda or any preceding or folk conceptions of seven goddesses. The Kuṣāṇa mothers were adapted from "low" culture to serve the middle class, manifesting that class's concerns for fertility, progeny, and protection from disease. By contrast, as *śaktis* of the highest gods, the Seven Mothers originated within the "high" theology of the Śākta religion (i.e., that in which divine feminine power, *śakti*, is the fundamental cosmic principle); they were invented by *brāhmaṇa* theologians, not absorbed from a preexisting pantheon of popular deities. They functioned mythologically to assist the *devas* (metaphorically, the *brāhmaṇa* and *kṣatriya* inheritors and defenders of the Vedic, now actually a refashioned "neo-Brāhmaṇic" religion) in their wars against the *āsuras* (metaphorically, the lower classes, non-Aryans, heretics, and, in Panikkar's reading, also, by extension, women).

Chapter 3 reviews inscriptional evidence for the worship of the Seven Mother Goddesses, as well as the literary treatment and descriptions of them in the Purāṇas, *śilpa śāstras*, and other literature. They are seen from the earliest inscriptions to have Tāntric connections, and they appear in the earliest *śākta* text, the *Devī Māhātmya*. Panikkar sees Śākta religion as a conflation of three sources, namely, (1) Sāṃkhya philosophy, in which *prakṛti* is the fundamental principle, (2) the notion of *Brāhman*, adapted from Advaitya philosophy, and (3) Tāntric ritualism, which involves the yearning for bliss in the union of *puruṣa* with *prakṛti*, in which the male and female principles are equal and in which the female is given an active role. The standard set of Seven Mothers that crystallized in the late fourth to early fifth centuries consists of the *śaktis* of six male gods plus Cāmundā, who is a *śakti* of the great goddess Devī. Early texts vary as to the name and number of the Mothers (sometimes an eighth or even a ninth is added), but their origin and purpose are always similar: they act as aids to Devī or her consort Śiva in battles against *āsuras*.

In art the Seven Mothers appear almost invariably

in Śaivite contexts. (Michael Meister has shown that they may be found on Vaiṣṇavite and Devī temples as well, but having developed originally as a set within the context of Śaivism, this does not significantly alter their purport.) Chapters 4 through 6 analyze the treatment of the Seven Mothers in sculpture from their first appearance in Central India in the late fourth or early fifth century through the ninth century, with particular regard to regional conventions in iconography and stylistic presentation. Whereas the literary myths involve the Seven Mothers in violent narrative action, the sculptures are, from the beginning, iconic, stemming visually from the Kuṣāṇa-period icons of Skanda with his adoptive mothers. Panikkar identifies three phases. In the first phase (fourth through mid sixth centuries) the Seven Mothers appear accompanied by Śiva and Skanda, who is now absorbed into Śaivism as Śiva's son. By the early sixth century Gaṇeśa is added to the group. Two main types of Seven Mother groups develop—the militant, in which the goddesses appear with weapons but no children, and the motherly, in which they hold children but have no weapons. These two types spread quickly from Central India to the west and the Deccan and merge in the sixth century to symbolize, according to the author, the ambivalent nature of the goddesses. The Deccan provides at least one sixth-century exception to this, however, in the Ravulaphadi cave at Aihole, where the goddesses hold no children. This variant will apparently be influential in some later sculpture in Orissa and particularly in South India, where the absence of children will persist.

Chapter 5 deals with phase two (mid sixth through the late seventh century), during which, after a transitional experimental period, a certain standardization sets in. Images gain greater iconographic complexity. Vehicles and weapons are used more commonly now to define the different personalities. Multiple heads and arms appear, although inconsistently for most goddesses. More regions are discussed in this chapter, including Orissa, the South, and Ellora. Sitting, standing, and, more rarely, dancing poses are preferred in various regions. Panikkar notes the implications of individual experiments, as at Mandor (Rajasthan) where, by placing Śiva uncharacteristically in the center of the group and moving

Maheśvarī from her usual position to be next to him, the sculptor helps to establish the Śaivite dominance of the group. The Śaiva-Śākta merger is underscored also in some instances by the addition of Mahākāla (Kāla or Kālabhairava) and Kālī at the end of the group. In the sixth century, Gaṇeśa replaces Skanda entirely.

Chapter 6 deals with phase three (eighth and ninth centuries). By now iconography and presentation had become largely standardized in the various regions. As the trend toward elaboration continues, almost all of the goddesses are now likely to have four arms, as well as more jewelry and attendant figures (at least in the North). One aim of this chapter is to address whether and how the different manners of presentation in each region may reflect different meanings. The results of this inquiry are not consistently highlighted, except in the South, where the author sees the seated frontality, iconicity, fixed staring eyes, as well as lack of children for the goddesses to interact with, as means of evoking psychological distance from the viewer, giving the goddesses authority. Tāntric elements appear strongest in East India, which is represented here by only one temple, the Vital Deul at Bhubaneśvar (one of the few temples dedicated to the Goddess).

The strength of chapter 7 is that the author declines to accept religious history as a “natural” process but rather describes the social and economic class tensions that propelled the construction and sociopolitical ascent of the neo-Brāhmaṇic religion. Whereas Katherine Harper writes that the “very idea of *śakti* as moving force behind gods disguises a peaceful succession [of the female] to the top of the pantheon,”³ Panikkar continues to see suppression of the female even within *śākta* texts such as the *Devī Māhātmya*. The Seven Mothers, like the goddess Durgā, are (with the exception of Cāmuṇḍā) created by the gods, in this case as female reflections of themselves, and although the supreme goddess Devī later absorbs all the *deva* and *devī śaktis*, declaring them parts of herself, this text and all others that extol the Goddess as supreme need to be seen in the context of a society in which women were less than equal in freedoms or rights. The Seven Mothers are thus paradoxically cast in the role of protectors of a *dharma* that suppresses women's opportunities. Panikkar

only alludes to the exact terms of the suppression by referring the reader to the *dharmaśāstras* and by claiming that women were “essentialized” as mother, wife, lover, and so forth. The argument could have been strengthened at this point by providing examples of the historical changes in the status and rights of women during this period. In fact, the position of women had worsened steadily from the post-Vedic period up until modern times and continues today (despite corrections in many laws) to reflect this depressing legacy. A few examples concerning women’s education, decreasing marriage age, inheritance rights, sexuality, and so forth could have placed the author’s arguments quickly into perspective. To fail to do so risks treating society’s attitudes toward women throughout the historical record as eternal and unchanging rather than historically specific, which is clearly not the author’s intention. This is especially important, since the author consistently links the exploitation of the lower classes to that of the female gender, as if they were equivalent. We would like to see here some nuanced distinctions drawn between the two. Conversely, one feels the need for further argument that the threats that each may have posed to the prevailing social elites were seen as identical and thus responded to as such. Some of the language used to characterize the lower classes and women as the “exploited” or to decry “the colonization of the female gender and the producer

classes” (p. 156) may seem, at times, reductive and inflammatory. Nevertheless, the author argues well that the inclusion of Tāntric and śāktic elements within the organized brāhmaṇical cults appropriated, in a subordinate position, tendencies that may have threatened brāhmaṇical authority had they existed only outside of it. As a general outline of history, the arguments present a convincing picture. In this context, Panikkar’s study of the development of the Seven Mothers in art becomes much more than just a list of works.

The black and white illustrations are of good quality. Numerous grammatical errors mar the text, and, in my copy at least, chapter 3 was printed twice. If the book goes into a second edition, these mistakes should be corrected, for they detract from the author’s otherwise important insights.

NOTES

1. Michael Meister, “Regional Variations in Mātṛkā Conventions,” *Artibus Asiae* 47, 3/4 (1986): 233–62.
2. Katherine Harper, *The Iconography of the Saptamatrikas: Seven Hindu Goddesses of Spiritual Transformation* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1989).
3. Harper, *Iconography of the Saptamatrikas*, 94.

GARY SMITH

